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Outdoor Photography

landscape | wildlife | nature | adventure







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Navy
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EDITOR'S LETTER

LIVING THE DREAM

What would you really like to do with your photography? One educated guess is to win a competition, and another stab in the dark is to have your own gallery. Well, in this issue we have two photographers who are very much living these dreams.

In the middle of February, we had the wonderful pleasure of revealing the overall winner of our Outdoor Photographer of the Year competition at a live awards ceremony at the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show at London ExCel. It was a great moment when the closely guarded secret (not even the judges knew who had scooped the top prize) was finally given up. You can find out who won on page 53, and then follow him as he sets off on the adventure of a lifetime, across Arctic Scandinavia with a dogsled as part of the epic Fjällräven Polar expedition.

Down on the south coast of England, Finn Hopson is just setting out on his own personal dream journey, having opened his photography gallery on the seafront opposite Brighton's now ruined West Pier. It's an epic location

and a great home for his unique images of the South Downs and the Sussex coastline. It's a big move for a young photographer with a family, but so far it is paying off for him; he shares his story about the gallery and his refreshing approach to photographing locally – see page 18.

So, high on the positive energy that these two great photographers have brought to me this month, I am going to throw down a challenge to myself and any of you who fancy taking it up: how can we turn 2015 into a dream year, or at least make a move or two towards the dream?

I'm not advocating that we all rush out and sign gallery leases or enter every competition under the sun in the hope of a success. More, how can we set goals that inspire us to realise the potential we all have within us and that lies within our photographs. It could be to give a talk, or exhibit images for the first time, or even offer to cover local conservation causes. Enjoy the small steps.

Steve Watkins



GET IN TOUCH

EMAIL Contact the Editor, Steve Watkins, at steve@thegmcgroup.com or Deputy Editor, Claire Blow, at claire.blow@thegmcgroup.com

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COVER IMAGE

This stunning image of the Isle of Rum was taken by Lee Frost. Find out how to make the most of natural light in your landscape photographs with Lee's feature on page 28.

THE ISSUE at a glance

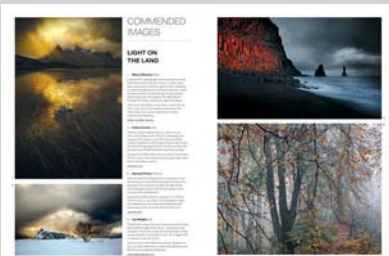


IN CONVERSATION WITH
Finn Hopson

Finn Hopson talks about his love of shooting the South Downs – page 18



Lee Frost shows us how to maximise light in the landscape – page 28



See the winner and commended images from OPOTY 2014 – page 53



Andy Luck puts the new Panasonic LX100 through its paces – page 92

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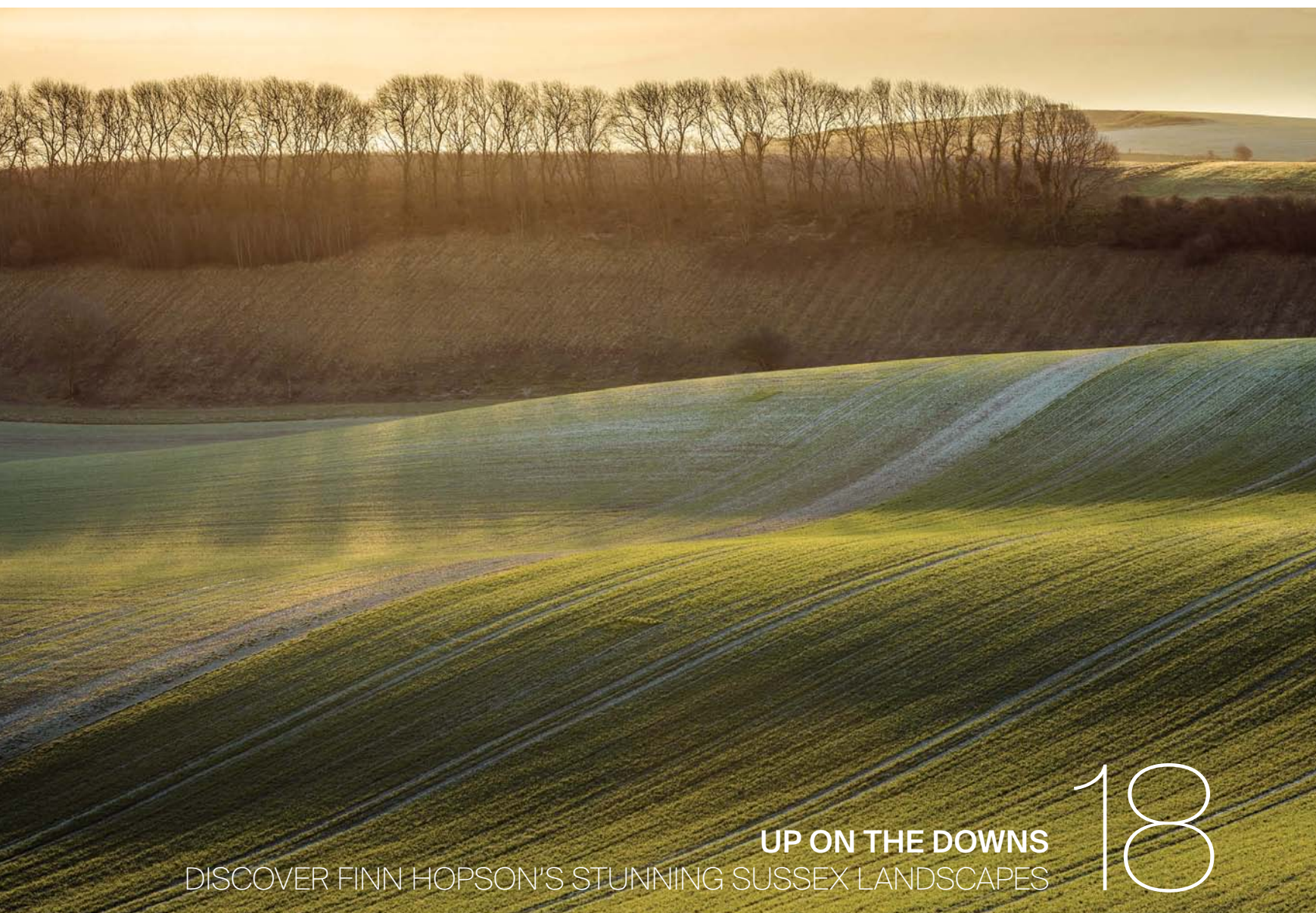
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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 9 APRIL 2015

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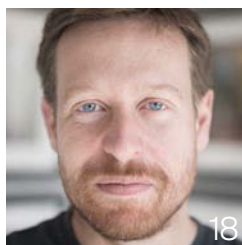
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IN THE MAGAZINE THIS MONTH...



COVER + 28-33

Over the last 20 years, **Lee Frost** has become one of the UK's leading landscape and travel photographers and one of the world's bestselling photography authors. He also leads sell-out photo workshops and tours. leefrost.co.uk



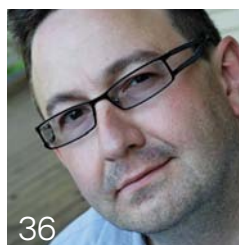
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Finn Hopson is a landscape photographer from Brighton. After a childhood spent on the South Downs, he now spends his time photographing the area, trying to capture the shapes and textures. In 2014 he opened the Brighton Photography gallery near the city's West Pier. finnhopson.com
brightonphotography.com



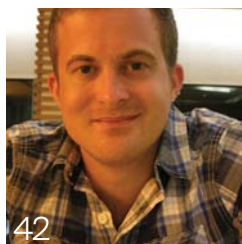
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Russ Barnes is an outdoor photographer based in the Midlands. He aims to capture the soul of the landscape and create images that are artistic and ethereal by using some less than conventional approaches. russbarnes.co.uk



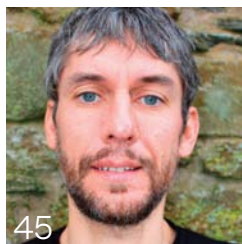
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Pete Bridgwood is a fine art landscape photographer and writer. He is fascinated by the creative foundations of landscape photography and passionate about exploring the emotional elements of the art. petebridgwood.com



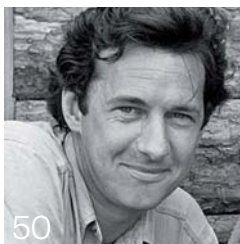
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Stu Meech took up landscape photography in 2008 and is now semi-professional. He can be found photographing land and sea all over the UK when he's not working as a production electrician in the theatre industry. stumeech.co.uk



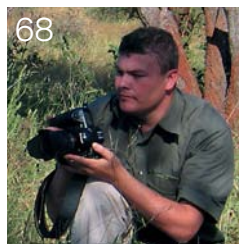
45

Mark Ferguson lives in the Orkney Islands and his passion is to capture the island's sparkling, crystal-clear light and its illuminating effect on the landscape. He regularly supplies images to various publications and is currently expanding his portfolio into Caithness and Sutherland. markfergusonphotography.co.uk



50

Paul Harris trained as a photojournalist. He is passionate about storytelling through his travel, adventure and documentary imagery; balancing the road less travelled with the spirit of the land and its peoples. Paul is a sought-after tutor, and leads photo tours for Wild Photography Holidays. paulharrisphotography.com



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Chris Weston is a professional wildlife photojournalist. He has travelled widely to document the issues and challenges facing many of the world's rarest species and is the principle photographer for the NGO Animals on the Edge. chrisweston.photography



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Robin Hoskyns is a young biologist and photographer. With degrees in both evolutionary biology and conservation, he hopes to tell stories about the wildlife he works with as well as the scientific research and conservation issues involved. robinhoskyns.co.uk



80

Steve Young has been at *OP* from issue one. His images have appeared in numerous publications and he has written two bird photography books and photo-edited two bird identification guides. He was the overall winner of the 2010 British Wildlife Photography Awards. birdsonfilm.com



83

Nick Smith is a writer and photographer specialising in travel and environmental issues. He is a contributing editor on the *Explorers Journal* and is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. nicksmithphoto.com



92

Andy Luck is an award-winning wildlife short programme producer, and also an environmental photojournalist with a passion for cameras and photography. His work has been widely published, and he is a regular contributor to *OP*. wildopeneye.com

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

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Outdoor Photography

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Circulation manager Tony Loveridge
Printer Precision Colour Printing, Telford,
01952 585585
Distribution Seymour Distribution Ltd

Outdoor Photography (ISSN 1470-5400)
is published 13 times a year by GMC Publications Ltd.
86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XN.
Tel 01273 477374

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Dalmatian pelican

by Richard Peters

Lake Kerkini in northern Greece is one of the most important wintering sites for the Dalmatian pelican, whose declining numbers are now estimated at only 15,000. On the second afternoon of my two-day trip, the sun dipped behind the distant mountains, providing very low and soft ambient light. The resulting frame would be almost devoid of colour if it weren't for the bird's bright gular pouch, which contained its freshly caught meal.

Nikon D810 with 600mm VR lens, ISO 3200, 1/320sec at f/8



OPENING SHOT



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COMPETITIONS

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TECHNOLOGY

OTHER NEWS



© Niall Bervie

Beavers allowed to stay on Devon river

A colony of breeding beavers – the first found living in the wild in England for 500 years – is to be allowed to remain on the river Otter in Devon. Once it has been established that the beavers are free from disease, Devon Wildlife Trust will manage and monitor the beavers on a five-year trial basis. It is the first time permission has been given to reintroduce a mammal previously extinct in England.

Harry Barton, Chief Executive of Devon Wildlife Trust, said: 'This is a historic moment. The beavers of the river Otter are the first breeding population in the English countryside for hundreds of years. We believe they can play a positive role in the landscapes of the 21st century through their ability to restore our rivers to their former glory. We know from our own research and research done in Europe that beavers are excellent aquatic engineers, improving the flood and drought resilience of our countryside and increasing the water quality of our rivers. They are incredibly industrious animals and their hard work has benefits for people and wildlife.'

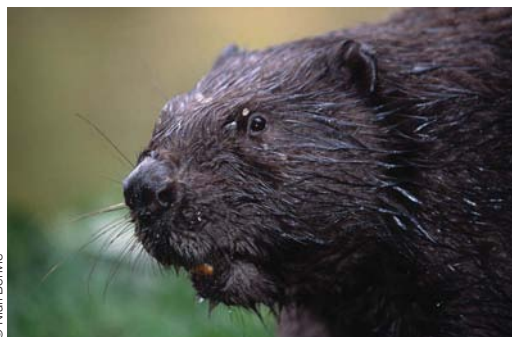
The family of beavers was first spotted on the river Otter in February last year. It is still a mystery how they came to be there, but some believe they

were illegally released into the wild by wildlife campaigners. Devon Wildlife Trust says there are now three young 'kits' and at least eight adults.

European beavers were once widespread across our rivers and waterways, but they were hunted to extinction in the UK by the 16th century because they were highly prized for their fur and castoreum.

The Wildlife Trusts are currently running a number of beaver reintroduction trials in the UK, and further decisions about the future of beavers in Scotland and Wales are expected later this year.

To find out more, visit wildlifetrusts.org/beavers



© Niall Bervie

Calling all wildlife photographers...



Long-tailed tits by John R Barlow

The 2015 British Wildlife Photography Awards are well underway. With 19 categories covering every aspect of wildlife in Britain, the competition invites entries from amateur and professional photographers and filmmakers of all ages. There is a top prize of £5,000 up for grabs, and winners and commended entrants will have their work showcased in a touring exhibition and published in a stunning book. There are also some superb prizes from lead sponsors Canon and Sky – including a Canon PowerShot G7x for each category winner and a Canon XA20 professional camcorder for the Wildlife in HD winner.

OP readers' discount

We have teamed up with BWPA to offer OP readers a special entry discount. Until midnight on 31 March 2015, when you purchase four entry credits on the BWPA website (allowing you to submit up to 10 images), you can receive an extra credit for free – simply use the voucher code OPAPR15. So, if you wish to enter 20 images in the Adult Competition, for example, you can pay for just 10. Each credit costs £5, and all of the fees are fully explained on the BWPA website.

The competition is open until 2 May.

Find out more at bwpawards.org.

Coastal erosion near Hornsea (2013) by Ashley Cooper



Spotlight on the environment

The Atkins CIWEM Environmental Photographer of the Year 2015 is open for entries until 7 April 2015. Free to enter, and with a total prize fund of £8,000, the competition invites amateur and professional photographers and filmmakers of all ages to share images of environmental and social issues. The overall winner will receive £5,000, and one photographer will be given the opportunity to hold a solo exhibition at one of England's public forests. All the winning images will go on display at London's Royal Geographical Society from 22 June to 3 July 2015. For further information and to apply, visit epoty.org.

Broads to be called a national park

The lakes and waterways of Norfolk and Suffolk are to be rebranded as the Broads National Park. Nearly 80% of members of the Broads Authority voted in favour of re-naming the area, previously known simply as the Broads, in an effort to attract more visitors.

For 25 years the area has held equivalent status to Britain's other designated national parks but, because the Broads Authority is also responsible for managing the waterways, it does not face the same legal restrictions.

Stephen Johnson, Chairman of the Broads Authority, said: 'Branding the area rather than seeking a legal change is an eminently pragmatic move. It was additionally agreed to no longer pursue the long held ambition to become a national park by law, as the branding gives the area all the benefits it needs.' broads-authority.gov.uk

NUMBER CRUNCH



© Alnars Aunins/Shutterstock.com

7,290 – the maximum altitude, in metres, reached by bar-headed geese as they fly over the Himalaya. The species undertakes the world's highest bird migration. A team led by researchers from Bangor University has tracked the birds' flight and revealed how they rise and fall with the mountainous terrain in order to conserve energy.

2,226 – the estimated number of tigers remaining in India. According to an official census, the population has risen 30% since 2011. India's Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar has described the findings as a 'huge success story'.



Pierre-Yves Babelon/Shutterstock.com

1,215 rhinos were poached in South Africa in 2014 – the highest number ever and a 21% increase on the previous year, say officials. Most were killed in the country's famous Kruger National Park. Conservation charity Save the Rhino warns that rhinos could be effectively extinct in the wild by 2026 if poaching continues to rise at current rates.

2.93 billion visits to natural environments were made by the English adult population between March 2013 and February 2014, according to a government report – the highest number for five years. The report also provides evidence that our enthusiasm for spending time outdoors as a way to keep healthy has markedly increased.

300 – the maximum read/write speed, in megabytes per second, of Microdia's new Xtra Elite SD 4.0 flash memory card. Microdia claims it can simultaneously capture and load images and footage many times faster than current flash memory cards, and can handle 4K and 5K-resolution files with equal panache. Due out in mid-2015, the cards will be available with 16GB, 32GB, 64GB, 128GB, 256GB and 512GB capacities.



© Steph Gibson

Steph Gibson's image of her border collie, Swing, working with sheep on her farm in Australia, has been chosen as the overall winner of the Dog Photographer of the Year 2014 competition. The contest, run by the Kennel Club, attracted nearly 13,000 entries from over 60 countries. See all the winning images at dogphotographeroftheyear.org.uk.

OS limitations for Lightroom 6

The new version of Lightroom will only be compatible with 64-bit operating systems, Adobe has announced. Rather than making the program compatible with older hardware, Adobe says it is instead focusing on adding features that require the latest operating systems to work, including improved performance.

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6, which is expected to be released later this year, will require Mac OS X 10.8 or above, or a 64-bit version of Windows 7, 8 or 8.1. Photographers who use 32-bit operating systems will still be able to install and run Lightroom 5, but will not be able to upgrade to the new version.

adobe.com/uk

OUT THERE

IN PRINT

Uncommon Ground: A word-lover's guide to the British landscape

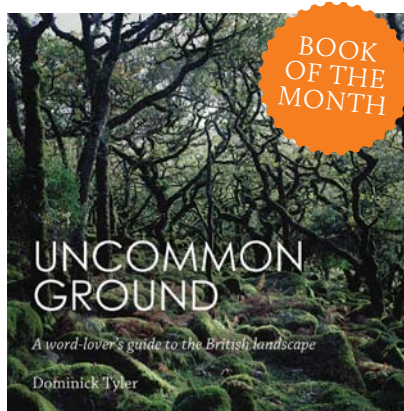
Dominick Tyler

» Faber & Faber

» 978-1-78335-048-3

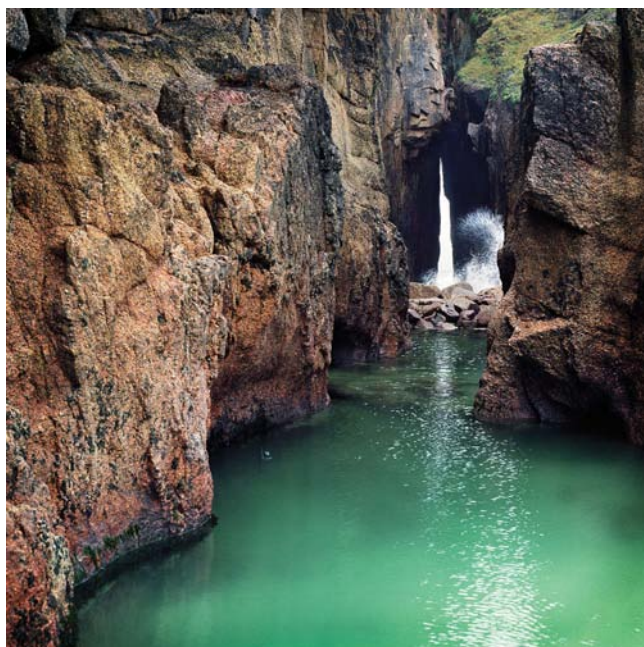
» £16.99, Paperback

It all began when photographer Dominick Tyler decided to record the words he discovered that related to the landscape. As his vocabulary widened, his knowledge and appreciation for nature developed – something he



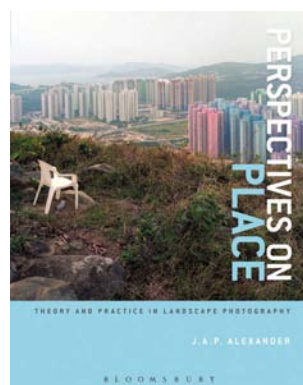
consequently felt greatly enhanced his photography. In his latest book, Tyler details his favourite words, with a brief description of their origin, meaning and where the geological features they describe can be found around the UK, and sets them alongside his beautiful photographs – all taken on a Hasselblad 503CW camera and Kodak Ektar film.

Drawing upon geological, literary and colloquial sources, Tyler reveals the strangeness that is the English language. He explains the meaning of the term 'witches' knickers', why certain rocks are known as thunder eggs, and what makes something a spheroblast. A celebration of the hidden natural wonders found around Britain, the book also brings seldom-used words back into the spotlight. But that's not all. *Uncommon Ground* acts as a reminder that an all-encompassing interest in a subject can lead to a more insightful approach. It also shows how different forms of artistic expression, in this instance writing and photography, can be combined for maximum impact.



top Cornice, Cairngorms National Park
bottom Zawn Pyg, Nanjizal Beach, Cornwall

© Dominick Tyler



Perspectives on Place: theory and practice in landscape photography

JAP Alexander

» Bloomsbury

» 978-1-4725-3389-0

» £37.99, Paperback

With the development of interactive educational apps and an increase in

popularity of free tutorial videos, the printed 'how-to' guide could be seen as a diminishing genre, yet this excellent book should be on any serious landscape photographer's shelf. Striking a balance between practical and theoretical, *Perspectives on Place* is targeted towards experienced photographers who are keen to find their own way of seeing and engaging with the landscape rather than seeking out exhausted viewpoints. Emphasising the importance of honing one's own individual reaction to a subject, the author provides stimulating assignments that are both challenging and educational. Throughout the 192 pages, works by renowned photographers, past and present – including Fay Godwin, Paul Fusco, Keith Arnatt, Mark Power and Michael Wolf – are studied and their style interrogated in an intelligent manner. This wonderful book is an inspirational and aspirational resource.

Wald

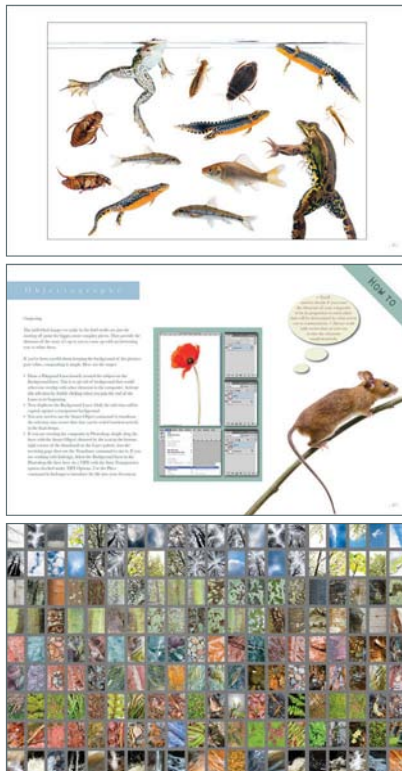
Simon Fröhlich

» Kehrer Verlag

» 978-3-86828-552-9

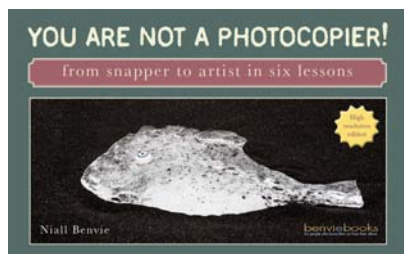
» £25.90, Hardback

When in a forest or wood, it can be easy to leave the outside world behind and become entranced by nature. In his latest book, *Wald* (meaning 'forest'), German-born photographer Simon Fröhlich invites you to wander through the trees and unleash your imagination. The 87 pictures are printed full-bleed and are impressionistic in style and subdued in colour – elements that contribute to the book's dreamlike quality. Deciding to shoot the project with film, Fröhlich explains in the brief introduction how this approach allowed him to embrace the unpredictability that analogue offers. This is a thought-provoking book that emphasises how suggestion can be more powerful than description.



INNOVATE, DON'T IMITATE: NIAL BENVIE'S NEW EBOOK

Regular *OP* columnist Niall Benvie is known for thinking outside the box and conjuring up innovative ideas around photography. His latest ebook, entitled *You are not a Photocopier! From snapper to artist in six lessons*, maintains his reputation and is sure to inspire photographers to explore different ideas and styles and to break away from generic images. In each of the six chapters, Niall sets the challenge of creating a photograph (using topics such as 'deconstruction' and 'interpretation' as springboards) that is hard for others to replicate. Niall adopts a playful approach through quirky design and with his lighthearted tone, making the prospect of developing your individual expression an enjoyable and fun endeavour. Refreshing, witty and full of useful information, this ebook is a success from the first to the last page.



You are not a Photocopier! From Snapper to artist in six lessons is available via niallbenvie.com. The standard ebook costs £8, while the hi-res, interactive, version costs £9.50

FIVE MINUTES WITH... DEBORAH IRELAND



Born in 1831, Isabella Bird was one of the most remarkable female travellers of the 19th century. Documenting her global voyages through vivid prose and enlightening photographs, Bird's travel books continue to evoke the spirit of adventure. To celebrate her last great journey through China, the Royal Geographical Society has opened its archive to produce an engaging pictorial record of this inspiring woman and her exhilarating experiences. We caught up with former assistant curator of the Royal Photographic Society's archive and head of the AA World Travel picture library, Deborah Ireland, who wrote the introduction to the book, to find out more...

ANNA BONITA EVANS What appealed to you about Isabella and her work to make you want to contribute to this book?

DEBORAH IRELAND It was her passion for photography that really drew me in. What is very clear is that once Isabella started to learn about photography, she loved everything about the process – she called it an 'intense pleasure'. She had her first lesson at the age of 61 and set out two years later to Korea with two cameras: a Ross camera with a tripod, which weighed 16lbs, and a hand camera, which weighed 4lbs. She used a combination of celluloid film and glass plate negatives.

ABE In the book's introduction, you reveal Isabella Bird's fascinating experiences as a traveller; what do you think was her most remarkable feat?

DI Perhaps her most amazing feat was when she got caught up in a war in Korea in 1894. She was deported on a Japanese ferry bound for China and, without money or luggage, she managed to make her way to the Chinese city of Mukden. During the journey she saved the lives of villagers caught up in a flood, was becalmed, became ill with malaria and broke her arm when a cart she was travelling in overturned.

ABE You mention how Isabella would often process her negatives and print out in the field – often under the night sky. Are all of the images reproduced in the book her original prints?

DI Yes, we used her original prints held in the Royal Geographical Collection. One of the great joys of working with the originals was seeing the wide variety of tonal ranges she created in her prints. She believed toning greatly enhanced the appearance of a print, and often increased contrast and changed the colour depending on the metals used during the process.

ABE How did you go about selecting the pictures for the book? Did you want to give more of an historical overview of her travels or highlight the aesthetic value of her photographs?

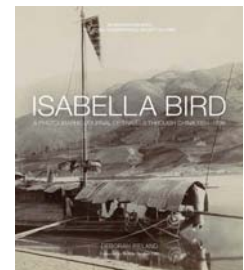
DI We selected images that would best tell the story of the three journeys she made through China. Part of the process was to research in detail Isabella's time in the country. This helped identify some images that were previously uncaptioned. Isabella often captured more than just the subject, and provided an intriguing view of the place she was travelling in. It's the incidental inclusion of ship sterns and people peering out from buildings that enrich the general picture.

ABE Do you see Isabella Bird more as a photographer or as a writer?

DI Isabella was one of the best travel writers of the 19th century, but for me she is a photographer. She said: 'I am almost ashamed to say that photography has become a complete craze. I like it better than any pursuit I ever undertook, and if I should ever have time to give to the techniques of the art, I hope to improve considerably.'

Isabella Bird: A photographic journal of travels through China 1894-1896 is out on 17 March

Deborah Ireland
Ammonite Press
978-1-7814-5-097-0
£25, Hardback



Reader offer! Buy the book for £17.50 plus P&P. To order, call 01273 488005, and use the code R4767. Valid until 6 June 2015, UK readers only. Please note: P&P is £2.95 for the first item and £1.95 for each additional item. The offer is only available over the phone.

THE BIG VIEW

EXHIBITIONS

1 Syngenta Photography Award

» Somerset House, London

» To 10 April

Winning and shortlisted pictures from the 2014 Syngenta Photography Awards are now on display at Somerset House. The competition, which was originally set up in 2013, aims to highlight awareness around significant global environmental issues. This year, submissions were centred around the theme 'Scarcity-Waste'. Finalists include British photographer Richard Allenby-Pratt, who recorded deserted property developments on the outskirts of Dubai, and US photographer Mustafah Abdulaziz, for his image of a group of Turkana women sourcing water from a 20m-deep borehole during Kenya's 2009 drought (pictured below).

syngenta.com

2 Origins

» Heist Gallery, London

» To 30 April

Images by eight of the most interesting photographers working today – including Jimmy Nelson and Xavier



© Jimmy Nelson

Guardans – are on display at the Heist Gallery as part of a show that focuses on indigenous people, the environments in which they live and their cultural traditions. Sculptures by Patrick Colhoun and Khaled Zaki are also included, and the gallery has been transformed into the style of a Yoruba home, a group native to south-west Nigeria.

heist-online.com/gallery

3 International Garden Photographer of the Year

» Kew Gardens, London

» To 6 April

Always a visual delight, a stunning selection of successful images from the eighth International Garden Photographer of the Year is now on show at Kew Gardens. Evocatively titled categories

include: the Beauty of Plants, Wildlife in the Garden, the Bountiful Earth, Breathing Spaces, Greening the City, and Trees, Woods and Forests. Images range from sumptuous flower close-ups to sweeping landscapes and wildflower meadows. A selection of our favourite images from the competition will be featured in next month's *OP*.

igpoty.com



© Mustafah Abdulaziz

EXHIBITION WITH A DIFFERENCE

Coral Reefs: Secret cities of the sea

» Natural History Museum, London

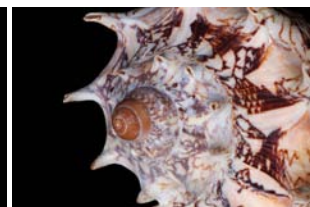
» 27 March to 13 September

The Natural History Museum invites you beneath the waves to get closer to the world's most spectacular coral reefs. Highlighting the importance of these ecosystems, the exhibition features 200 specimens from the museum's collection (including species collected by Charles Darwin), a live coral reef and a virtual dive for visitors to enjoy.

nhm.ac.uk



© NHM, London



ONE EXHIBITION NOT TO MISS...SOUTHBOUND

We talk to Finn Hopson about his Brighton-based photography gallery and his new exhibition, *Southbound*, which features his work alongside landscape images by Valda Bailey, David Baker and Terry Gibbins



David Baker



Valda Bailey



Terry Gibbins

ANNA BONITA EVANS As well as being a freelance landscape photographer, you are the owner of a photography gallery on Brighton's seafront. How are you finding it?

FINN HOPSON In theory, it's a perfect balance between early morning walks on the hills and long, lazy days by Brighton beach. In practice, it's a never ending logistical riddle of childcare, opening hours, printing, deadlines, deliveries and orders. Having said that, I've never had so much fun. The gallery was a bit of an unexpected opportunity that arose last year, so I'm still working out how to balance it all, but there are far worse problems to have.

ABE Valda Bailey, David Baker and Terry Gibbins are also landscape photographers based in the south-east. What else do you feel unites the three of you?

FH We all spend too much time on Twitter for a start. Aside from that, I think we all have an approach to landscape photography that's



Finn Hopson

trying to convey a sense of a place rather than simply recording it. It's to do with familiarity with a location or a process that's been built up over time, which I think really comes across in their work.

ABE What impresses you about the work of the other photographers in the exhibition?

FH The thing I most admire is their dedication and single-minded approach to what they're doing. Terry Gibbins and David Baker's images are great examples of what can be achieved in small, fairly anonymous areas of a landscape not far from home, and Valda is really pushing the boundaries of what photography can be. I've been a fan of all their work for several years and it's a huge privilege to be able to have their photographs on the gallery's walls.

ABE Did you work with Terry, David and Valda to select the images for the show?

FH When we first discussed it, I suggested a few examples of work that I particularly liked, but I felt really confident that each of them would be able to make their own selection that would best represent them. I didn't want the exhibition to be just my own favourites or for it just to be led by what I thought might sell. I think we've arrived at a collection of images that work brilliantly together, but also remains a very personal selection from each of us.

ABE Can you tell us a bit about how many photographs there will be and how they will be printed?

FH There will be about 40 images in total, split fairly evenly between the four photographers. We're all printing our own work and are using different types of Fotospeed paper (which they have very generously donated for the show). It's a good chance to see several different papers being used alongside each other and see how they each suit the work of each of the photographers.

ABE Where do you see the genre of landscape photography heading?

FH Up the nearest hill, I hope. I think it's such a good time to be a landscape photographer. It's hard to make a living from but, if landscape is your thing, there's never been such huge variety of inspiring work at your fingertips – and astonishing kit to use. It's an increasingly diverse genre, and for every cliché you see there's someone creating something quite unique somewhere else. There have never been so many ways to create, discover (and argue) about landscape photography, and I really believe that can only be a good thing.

Southbound runs until 1 May at Brighton Photography Gallery, 52-53 Kings Road Arches, Brighton, BN1 2LN; brightonphotography.com

THREE WILDLIFE AND NATURE EVENTS TO INSPIRE YOU

Advanced birder workshop

» WWT Slimbridge, Gloucestershire
» 17 April

This four-hour workshop is ideal for wildlife photographers wanting to enhance their bird knowledge. As well as covering details such as plumage, songs and calls, you'll learn about habitats and how to spot changes in the weather. Tickets cost £27.95. To book, call 01453 891223 or email event.slimbridge@wwt.org.uk. Full details at wwt.org.uk.

The Tweed Estuary walk

» Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland
» 10am, 12 April

A guided eight-mile walk along a section of the 97-mile long river Tweed, starting at Berwick Upon Tweed in the Scottish Borders. As well as learning about the history of the river, there will be plenty of viewpoints to stop off at and soak up the scenic landscapes. Tickets cost £8 and can be booked at shepherdswalks.co.uk. Places are limited, so be sure to book early.

Butterflies of north Bucks

» City Discovery Centre, Milton Keynes
» 7.15pm, 9 April

Volunteer conservation officer with Butterfly Conservation Nick Bowles will share his expert knowledge of the butterflies found in and around north Buckinghamshire. He'll also highlight the best times and places to see them. Tickets cost £3.50. To book, call 01908 669558 or email northbucksrspsb@hotmail.com

BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL WORLD TOUR

A selection of the best short adventure films are being shown across the UK and Ireland, as part of the 2015 Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour. Screenings take place at around 50 theatres: locations include Brighton, Inverness, London, Bristol and Cardiff. We recommend *The Ridge*, which follows trails bike rider Danny MacAskill's return home to the Isle of the Skye to cycle down the hazardous Cuillin Ridgeline, and *Touch*, which documents a flying tour to some of the world's most beautiful mountain ranges. For the full tour schedule go to banff-uk.com.

Your letters

Write to us! We love getting your views and responses; email claire.blow@thegmcgroup.com

LETTER
OF THE
MONTH

A new view of Galapagos

I really enjoyed Sam Rowley's 'Exploring the Galapagos Islands'

photo showcase in the March issue

(OP189). I'm lucky enough to have visited the islands myself, and will never forget the thrill of photographing the unique species living there. My personal favourites were the blue-footed boobies (unlike Sam, I didn't get to see red-footed ones) with their comical courtship dance. I was acutely aware that the trusting nature of Galapagos wildlife means it's up to us photographers to impose our own limits and respect the animals' space. That way we can hopefully maintain the fragile harmony of their world and continue to enjoy it both with and without a camera. Sam Rowley's fresh photographic take on a well documented part of the world shows great originality. I'm afraid mine (see right) was a bit more down to earth.

Chris Dunham, Leicester



© Chris Dunham

April's letter of the month winner, Chris Dunham, receives a MindShift Gear House of Cards memory card wallet, worth £18.50.

MindShift Gear's House of Cards lightweight memory card wallet offers convenient storage and protection for six CF cards and three SD cards. It features clear windows for easy identification of used and full cards, an elasticated band for silent access and security, and a built-in business card holder. Made from waterproof material, it has a removable tether clip that attaches to a belt, bag or clothing.

Available in the UK from snapperstuff.com



Frustrated artist

Great photos – you must have an expensive camera. We have all heard it before. Some of my friends have made similar comments without really understanding what they've said.

Recently, a visitor to my house, whom I had only met 30 seconds before, asked if the photos on the wall were mine and then said: 'modern cameras are great. You just stick them on automatic and they take brilliant pictures.' He may have only been in my house a short time but I felt like kicking him out. The comment pierced my heart more efficiently than a trained member of the SAS wielding a dagger.

He followed his comment with: 'modern cameras make it too easy.' If all you want to do is take a digital record of something bland, then he might have a point, but I don't know any photographers like that.

We continually get comments that photography is not an art form. But 25 years ago, and again last year, a painter worked directly from some of my photos. Is the photographer an artist or is the painter an artist? Even some famous artists, who I shouldn't name

for legal reasons, use photographers in a process I consider similar to painting by numbers. In one documentary I saw, the artist didn't even have much input regarding the taking of the photos. He just picked the ones he liked at the end.

I have also heard the argument that when you use Photoshop it is no longer photography, but it still isn't art because the computer is doing it. So you can't manipulate an image in Photoshop, but you can with a paintbrush?

Jo my wife is definitely right. I should pick up some brushes, sell my rubbish paintings for a fortune and carry on with the photography I love.

If you agree with my comments, then please be aware that my argument is only well put because I have typed it on an expensive keyboard.

Henry Szwinto, via email

Canon versus Nikon

I'm not a pro photographer and mainly photograph landscapes, with a bit of architecture every now and then. At the moment, gear wise, I'm in a dilemma of sorts. Currently I have a secondhand Techno with an equally secondhand Leaf 33MP back, which creates excellent

images but for backpacking at my age is becoming rather heavy. So I have been looking for a second camera to take into the wilds, as it were.

My dilemma is: Nikon or Canon? Canon has a superb set of tilt/shift lenses – the best in the business, I've heard – but even the new 50MP Canon EOS 5Ds R apparently does not have the dynamic range I'm used to in medium format and that you get with the Nikon D810. I've played around with a D800 and the dynamic range is astonishing. I've heard Nikon's PC lenses are not up to scratch, however and, depending what review you read, the focus is downright terrible.

As I prefer the Nikon camera, I wonder if any *OP* readers have had experience with the Nikon PC-E 24mm, and whether it is sharp or, as some seem to find, has a focusing issue?

Matt Smith, via email

Breathing space

Top marks for the full-page layout for the winners of Outdoor Photographer of the Year 2014 (OP189). Let's see more images given space to breathe.

David Hay, via email



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IN CONVERSATION WITH Finn Hopson

When Finn Hopson was presented with a chance to open his own gallery, he grabbed it with both hands. It gives him a superb space to show off his stunning photographs of his home patch, the South Downs and the Sussex coast. He tells us more about how it came about and why he loves shooting locally

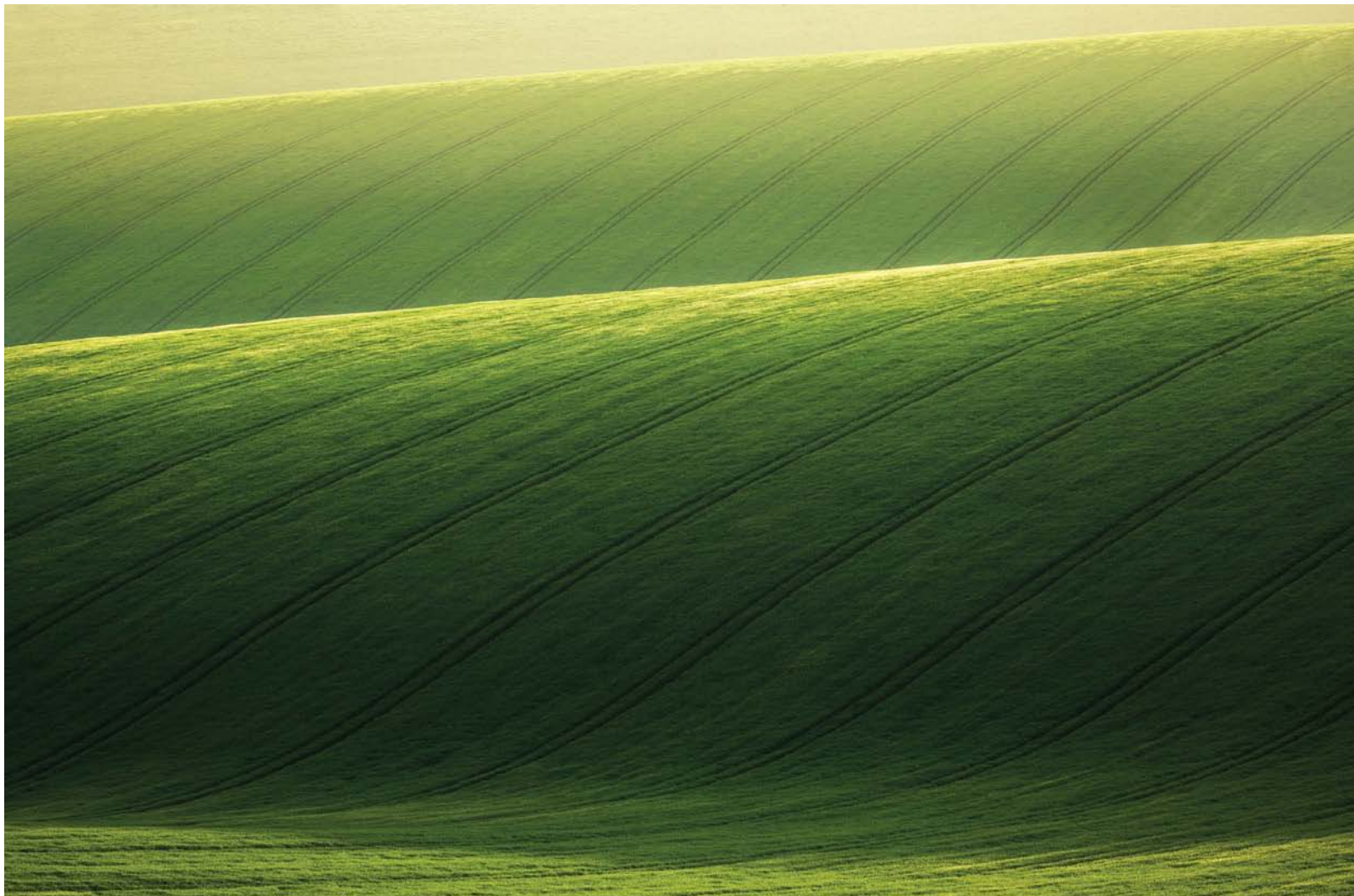
Encounter a huddle of landscape photographers and ask them what their greatest dream is, and I am fairly certain that many would converge on one answer: to have their own bricks and mortar gallery. It's probably the ultimate expression of this often solitary pursuit; a place to sit among your own photographs and await the adoring public coming in to buy prints.

Of course, life rarely lives up to lofty dreams, but Brighton-based landscape photographer Finn Hopson has set out on just this journey with his recently opened gallery in the arches opposite the iconic West Pier. And, thankfully, he isn't kidding himself that the reality can exactly match the dream. He has approached the entire project with a healthy dose of business

nous and caution, and the pre-requisite burning passion for his main subject, the South Downs. Since he seriously began photographing five years ago he has quickly developed a reputation for creating intimate, fresh and evocative imagery of the Downs and the Sussex coast, photographs that draw upon knowledge gathered during his lifelong exploration of the area, both on foot and by mountain bike.

It was a blustery and sunny winter's morning as I walked along the seafront, the now derelict West Pier clinging on against the relentless march of the white horses scooting across the English Channel. Just along from Finn's gallery, with its bright red sign, workmen were busily going about laying the foundations for the revolutionary new i360 Tower.

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When finished, in summer 2016, the doughnut-shaped glass observation pod will slowly rise up the tower until, at 138m above the ground, visitors are treated to a 360-degree view, which on good visibility days will stretch 25 miles along the coastline, and inland to the South Downs.

It was this project that sparked the redevelopment of the arches under the promenade, which gave Finn the unexpected opportunity to launch his own gallery. 'I was doing an open house (where the public visit exhibitions in artists' houses) during the Brighton Festival last May, and was selling a reasonable amount of my work. Then I got an email from the council to say they were seeking proposals for these new arches. I had watched the builders tear them all out, and took photos of the whole process; I'd wondered what they were going to do with them, and thought they were going to give them to the highest corporate bidders. I got the bid document anyway, and realised they were looking for local, independent businesses, especially creative ones, but they wanted you to prove it was a viable business. I thought, 'Ooh, wouldn't that be nice, to have a gallery, I'll give this a punt. Getting the bid in was the first all-nighter I had done in about 10 years! I put together an elaborately designed business plan to try to distract them from the fact that the numbers were educated guesses. That was partly because nobody had ever had a business on this part of the beach before, so I couldn't ask anyone, and I knew that my work sold in short exhibitions but wasn't sure if that would be sustained over a longer period. I printed the business plan on the backs of photographic prints and bound it, and hoped they

would just look at the pictures. I almost missed the deadline because it took so long to print double-sided, and I got it in with about five minutes to spare – I ran from the top of Kemp Town into Brighton to drop it off.'

After being shortlisted and getting some sound advice from his dad about pertinent business questions he needed to think about, such as where was he going to store all the images and could he really expect to sell something every three minutes in his busy periods, Finn had to face a 'Dragons' Den' sort of business plan presentation' to the council. They believed I'd thought about it quite thoroughly, which I had by that point. I subsequently went from getting an email to say I had got it to receiving the keys in about four to five weeks. Having grown up seeing people on the beach selling art, it had always surprised me that nobody else in Brighton was selling landscape photography. I felt it would be an interesting niche.'

Born in Brighton, Finn first started exploring the South Downs at the age of 12 when he got a mountain bike. 'I set off on a ride from Devil's Dyke to Ditchling Beacon and thought it was amazing. You hit the escarpment at Devils Dyke and you see that shape and the glorious, open countryside. I think it's essential for me to have this sense of place. I know what the Downs feel like to be on, I am very familiar with the smell and the texture of the landscape, and the way it changes. My in-laws live in Lyme Regis in Dorset. I love the countryside around there but I don't know the place and how it works; I don't feel as confident taking photos. I can go to Castle Hill Nature Reserve, on the South Downs near Woodingdean, and I've cycled along



that ridge to Kingston countless times, so I can quite easily just wander. I've spent a ludicrous amount of time, especially as a teenager and in my 20s, cycling and walking there, in the day and at night and in the snow and rain – I'm always learning about it. Going there scratches the itch for me, and find me a wiggly field to photograph and I'm totally happy. I'm not cycling up there as much as I used to, partly because I've got kids now and time is short, but I still find an excuse to be up in the hills with the wind in my hair.'

Although Finn has used a camera for much of his life, it was only a slightly accidental career in television production that convinced him to start taking photography more seriously. After doing a degree in psychology, Finn was on the lookout for what to do next when a friend who worked in television broke his arm. 'He needed a runner to assist him for a few weeks or so, someone to just carry things around and make the tea. I did it and thought this is the life. After finishing that, I got a job working on the Channel 4 comedy *Green Wing*. There were some great people working on it, and the director of photography would happily explain at length about why certain lenses, cameras and lighting worked best for certain scenes; it was an eye-opening experience. You see actors in a room and it all looks terribly boring and normal; there are no lights on because they are just rehearsing, then you watch the lighting guys quickly put some lights up and you look at it on the monitor and think, wow, how does that work? The lighting and lens choice had completely transformed the feel and atmosphere of the set. I thought it was magical stuff, and it has fed into how

I approach my photography. Many of the crew were into taking stills with DSLRs, and I got the bug from them.'

Finn's unique perspective on the South Downs and his insightful work on the Sussex coast has already won him many plaudits within the community. For him, one of the most important aspects of his photography is to help connect people to the places they only glimpse as they pass through or may not even know exist right on their doorstep. 'I like to show the potential of a place. A good example is Firle Beacon. A lot of people who come into the gallery know there is a car park just above Firle, and that you can go from there up on to the hill, but I like to tell them that if they keep walking and turn left at the first big fence they will walk along the most beautiful ridge they have ever seen. It's great to open that up to people.'

One particular story that sums up much of Finn's approach to life and his photography is about one of his most well-known images: a perfectly formed line of cows walking across the snow-covered Downs towards a bare tree. 'The best thing about that picture is that I completely randomly met the woman whose cows they are, she came into the gallery. Another of my pictures, of a tractor in a field, was used by an advertising agency in an advert for Lloyds in *Farmers Weekly*. The woman saw it and showed it to her dad, who identified it as his tractor because of the way the roof and the windows are organised. So she found out that it was my picture and came down to buy it for him as a present. While here, she saw the picture of the cows and said those are our cows! I've shot them in various images; they are my favourite cows, they always line up on

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a hillside somewhere. It was so pleasing to make that connection with her.'

Although people often tell Finn that he has carved out a great niche for himself, he doesn't see it quite that way. 'I think the analogy is more like whittling than carving. If you carve something it is very deliberate; you have a tree and you are going to carve a canoe, and you know what you are going to end up with otherwise you will get it all wrong. But you pick up a stick and a penknife when you are a kid and you start

whittling, and half the time you accidentally chop the stick in half and then think, ah, OK, I'll have to make a shorter stick. I used to like doing that. So I think my niche is something that I've whittled my way towards. I definitely didn't set out three or four years ago to do this.'

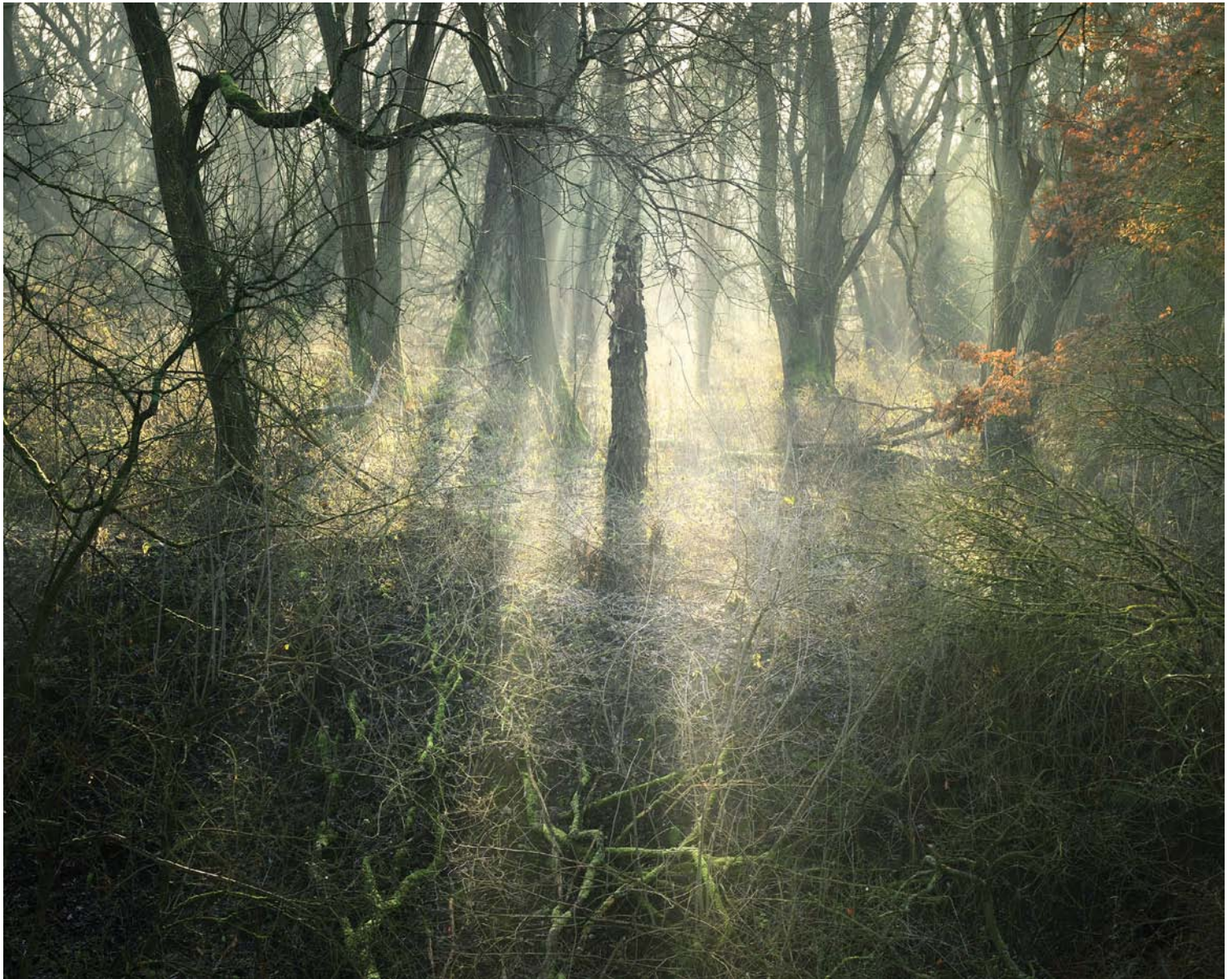
So how is the reality of owning a gallery matching up to the dream? Finn says, 'It was a gamble in that I had to put money into it, and it will take quite a while before it is turning a profit on paper, but it is a step up from doing a bit of freelance



photography, a bit of editing work, licensing some pictures, and always wondering where the next few quid was coming from. This feels like I am creating something for myself that has more potential to sustain me. My kids love coming down, so if I can stay the course of my 10-year lease they can grow up with this. It's great, it seems to be working, and I couldn't ask for more. I pinch myself in the mornings when I get to work, and it's the best place I have ever done my tax return! In my university student yearbook, they asked the question, where would you

be in five years' time? I wrote, on the beach. It's taken a couple of years longer to get there but I've now found a way of paying myself to be on the beach every day.'

*To see more of Finn's work, go to finnhopson.com. Visit his Brighton Photography Gallery at 52-53 Kings Road Arches, opposite the iconic West Pier, or go to brightonphotography.com. For details of the current exhibition, *Southbound*, featuring work from Finn, Valda Bailey, David Baker and Terry Gibbins, turn to page 15.*



Determined to make the most of the extensive areas of woodland found near his home, Russ Barnes has honed his ability to find powerful compositions within complex scenes

The Midlands may not be every landscape photographer's dream destination – finding even remotely exciting scenery with a modicum of drama can be a tall order at times. Living in this part of England does have its benefits, though; convenient and relatively quick access to more spectacular landscapes is possible via the converging network of motorways.

For me, though, that's cheating. I've long believed that making the most of your local landscape is what really gets you your stripes; a keen photographer's eye should at least occasionally be able to present the ordinary as extraordinary, regardless of location.

Fortunately, there is something that Warwickshire has in abundance: trees. This brings with it a challenge, however, because

as well as being plentiful, they are somewhat disorderly; the county is covered in 'messy' woodland. If you're something of a connoisseur where arboreal matters are concerned, you might prefer the slim lines of silver birch, or perhaps an orderly arrangement of sweeping pines. Well, you can't always choose what you get to work with in this life, so over time I've conditioned myself to accept the chaos and concentrate on carving compositions out of the plentiful disorder.

I think this policy has been very fruitful. In working to bring out the best from what are often competing elements in a scene, I think my eye for detail and my understanding of relationships between objects have been enhanced; my whole approach to composition has been sharpened. I'm sure this apprenticeship

has also paid dividends in other locations where less complexity might be on the table.

For me, the key is to let the available light lead the way. I will deliberately angle myself to the light, where I think I have the best chance of seeing an image, and then just walk, constantly studying my surroundings. I have undoubtedly developed a strong sense of telephoto vision; I seem to see whole scenes from a little distance, often where a wideangle would be useless. My image here, 'Edge of the Ravine' (shot with the Zeiss roomm f/2 lens), is testament to this whole endeavour.

I would certainly urge others to test their vision with my 'chaos theory'. It can take a while to find images in this way, but with practice you may be surprised how often a composition jumps out at you. ■

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JEREMY WALKER

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LEARNING ZONE

IMPROVE

28 **How to make the most of
natural light in the landscape**

34 **Quick guide to...
Abstract landscapes**



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Lee Frost shows you how to use natural light to maximum effect

How to make the most of natural light in the landscape

If you want to create great landscape photographs, you need great light. Lee Frost looks at the factors that influence its quality, and how you can turn any light conditions to your advantage

Landscape photography should really be re-named 'lightscape photography', because while the subject matter we set out to photograph may be land, it's the nature of the light striking the land that dictates its character and physical appearance – and the success of the images we capture with our cameras. Light is our subject really, and the landscape a mere stage on which it performs.

Not convinced? Then look through your favourite landscapes and ask yourself what it is that appeals most to you about them. Sometimes it will

be the drama of the location, or the way you've composed a scene, but more often than not it's the quality of light that seals the deal – to the point that a relatively mundane location can be the source of amazing photographs if you capture it in great light. A stunning scene, meanwhile, can look flat and lifeless on a grey day.

Your job as a landscape photographer is to recognise the factors that influence the quality of natural light, then make sure you're in the right place at the right time to harness the light at its very best.

TIME OF DAY

The greatest factor influencing the quality of light is the time of day. As the sun travels across the sky between sunrise and sunset, the light it generates is constantly changing.

Before sunrise there's a period known as pre-dawn, during which any light present is reflected from the sky, so it's very soft; shadows are weak and the world takes on a cool blue/grey hue. Then, as first light approaches, pastel colours begin to appear in the sky and the landscape looks very atmospheric – especially in misty weather, when it's washed with a soft, golden hue.

Once the sun peeps over the horizon, it's all change. In a matter of minutes the sky becomes much warmer, and any clouds present near the horizon reflect light and colour from the sun, though the landscape is still being lit by the sky overhead and often looks cool and subdued until the sun appears. When it does, warm sunlight rakes across the landscape, casting long shadows that reveal texture and form. Shadows are weak when the sun is close to the horizon because they're partially filled in by light from the sky, and at sunrise they often look blue in colour because the sky is predominantly blue.

As the sun starts to climb in the sky, the earth warms, the light becomes more intense and shadows grow shorter and denser. The warmth in

right The famous lone tree at Rannoch Moor, Highland, which was sadly lost in a gale in 2011. Sunsets are usually easy to predict because you can see how the weather and light is changing.
Canon EOS 1Ds MkIII with 24-70mm lens, ISO 100, 2.5sec at f/16, 0.6 ND grad



the light also begins to fade back to neutral, and stays that way for much of the day.

Once the sun climbs higher than 36° above the horizon, the light reaches maximum intensity. In summer, this point is reached five hours after sunrise, usually around 9am, and remains so until at least 4pm. In spring and autumn the period is shorter, usually between 10am and 2pm, while in winter the intensity of the light and angle of the sun remains low enough to provide attractive light throughout the day.

Perhaps the most photogenic time of day is the hour or so before sunset, when the world is bathed in beautiful golden light and even the most ordinary scene is brought to life. The light is often much warmer than at dawn because it's scattered and diffused by the thicker atmosphere – that's why the sun often looks bigger at sunset than it did at sunrise.

And then, of course, there's sunset itself. There are few sights more magical than the sun's golden orb slowly dropping towards the horizon.

PRO TIPS

- » Avoid chasing the light by arriving at your location nice and early.
- » Keep up to speed with sunrise and sunset times throughout the year. Many weather forecasting websites and apps provide this information.
- » To get an idea of just how the quality of light changes, spend a whole day at the same location – from before sunrise until nightfall – and take a series of shots, or return to the same location at certain times of day. You'll be amazed how different the same scene can look.



above (top) Near Mandalay, Burma. The soft colours before dawn are well worth getting up early for.
Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 17-40mm lens, 0.45 ND grad, ISO 100, 15sec at f/11

above Near Pienza, Tuscany. Harsh midday light needs to be used on the right kind of scene.
Pentax 67 with 55mm lens, Fuji Velvia ISO 50, 1/4sec at f/16, polariser

below Brighton Pier. Even on a cloudy day the light can be spectacular.
Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 16-35mm lens, 0.6 ND grad, ISO 50, 1/2sec at f/22

WEATHER OR NOT

Although the light changes constantly through the day, variations in the weather also have a major effect on the quality of light and create the endless permutations that make landscape photography so challenging and exciting. If every day were the same and the light was predictable, much of that challenge would be lost. You might think you'd enjoy that but, believe me, within a month you'd be bored rigid! Fortunately, in the UK at least, that's not the case, and landscape photography is as much about capturing the effects of weather on the land as the effects of light on the land.

My favourite conditions for landscape photography are created on days when the sky is full of dark, brooding clouds, a strong wind is blowing and there's the imminent threat of a storm. In such





conditions there's a high risk of rain, but equally at some point the sun is likely to break through, producing a spectacular play of light and shade on the landscape.

Such weather really keeps you on your toes, as the light is constantly changing and you have to call upon all your skills and experience to capture it. On many occasions I've waited for hours for such a break to occur, only to return empty-handed or be on the verge of giving up when the storm momentarily subsides and rays of sunlight suddenly break through the sky. But the risk and wait is often worthwhile because when these breaks do occur they always produce dramatic, memorable images.

When faced with such changeable weather, you need to act quickly because breaks may only last a few seconds before another eruption of clouds snuffs out the sun.

I always check the weather forecast for the next day if I'm planning to rise early and shoot locally, and I check the long-term forecast before embarking on a trip. Over the years, however, I've found that the best bet is just to go for it, regardless of what the forecast says – unless rain is predicted for days on end. Most of my landscapes are shot during trips away from home of a week or more in duration. Once I've driven 300 miles to reach an area, or flown to another country, I've already committed myself, and it would be pointless to turn around and head back home just because the weather is bad for a day.



top Isle of Skye. You need to be quick to capture breaks in a storm.

Canon EOS 1Ds MkIII with 24-70mm lens, ISO 200, 1/80sec at f/11, 0.6 ND grad

above (top) Glen Torridon, Highland. 'Bad' weather can result in dramatic images.

Canon EOS 1Ds MkIII with 70-200mm lens, ISO 200, 1/320sec at f/8

PRO TIPS

» When you're heading out in bad weather, make sure you have a waterproof cover for your camera. A stuffsack or drybag will do the trick if you get caught in a sudden downpour, or you could buy a purpose-made camera cover that allows you to shoot in rain. I use Op/Tech Rainsleeves, which cost about £5 for two.

» There are lots of useful weather-forecasting websites. I usually compare two or three, such as metoffice.gov.uk, metcheck.com and xcweather.co.uk. The Photographer's Ephemeris (photoephemeris.com), a map-centric sun/moon calculator, is a handy app worth having on your smartphone.

above Gearrannan, Outer Hebrides. Seconds later, the heavens opened!

Canon EOS 1Ds MkIII with 24-70mm lens, ISO 100, 2sec at f/22, 0.6 ND grad

DEALING WITH DULL DAYS

Drab, overcast days provide the least inspiring conditions for colour landscape photography. The light is soft and shadow-free, contrast is lower than a snake's belly and the colours in the landscape look muted and drab. Throw in a blanket grey sky and you've got a recipe for disaster. Or have you?

Well, no actually. All types of weather bring their own unique blend of characteristics to the landscape, and dull days are no exception. Soft, low-contrast light is great for revealing fine detail, so instead of trying to shoot sweeping wideangle views, look at the landscape on a smaller scale. Cut the sky out completely, as it will only dilute the impact of your pictures, and instead fill the frame with small details. The patterns and soft colours in rock formations can produce wonderful fine art images and are better suited to soft light. Grasses blowing in the wind, lichens, tree bark, sand patterns – once you start to look around you'll find loads of things to fill the frame, especially in woodland or on the coast.

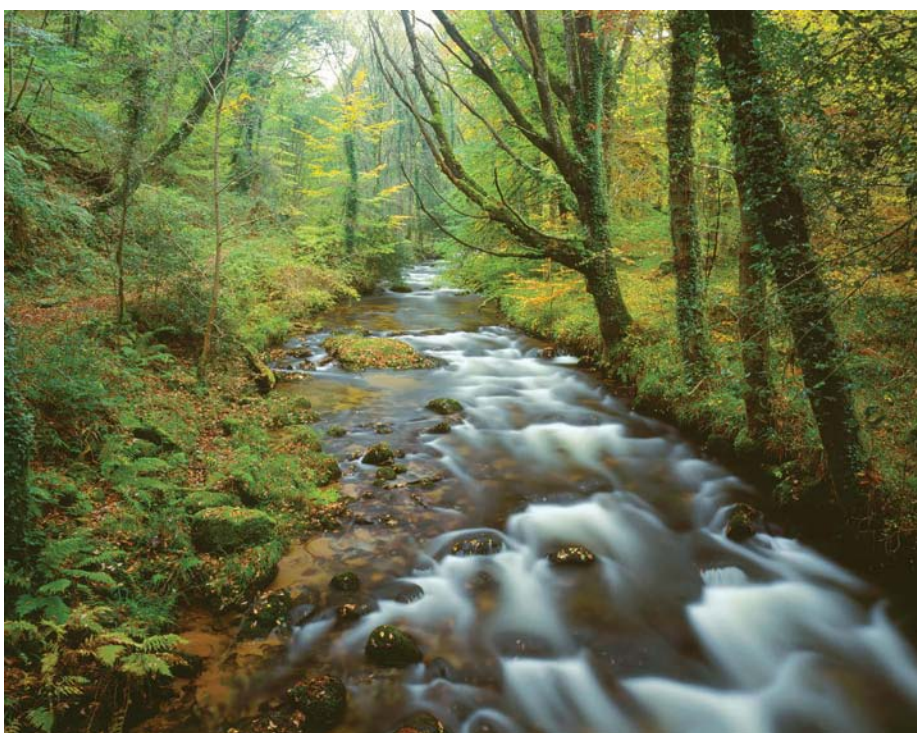
The lush, green foliage of spring and the earthy colours of autumn foliage are also best photographed in dull weather, as such conditions allow you to really bring out those rich colours. On sunny days, contrast can be excessively high in woodland due to patches of sunlight breaking through, but on a dull day this isn't an issue because there is no direct sunlight. Try using a polarising filter to cut through the glare on damp foliage, and watch those colours ping.

Photographing moving water

Rivers and waterfalls are another great dull day subject. As with woodland, low-contrast light is a bonus because you don't have to worry about sparkling highlights in the water, which burn out and cause ugly hotspots. The most popular technique when photographing moving water is to use a slow shutter speed so the water records as a graceful blur. Try half a second and see what you get. If you need more blur, increase the exposure to one second or longer. This is easier to achieve on a dull day because light levels are naturally lower, though you can always use a polariser or neutral density filter to cut the light even more and force an exposure increase. A polariser does the same job as a 0.6 ND and increases the exposure by two stops – so a half-second exposure becomes a two-second exposure at the same aperture and ISO.

Converting to monochrome

The other option on dull days is to convert your images to black & white. That way it doesn't matter if colours are muted and the sky is overcast because you can increase the drama of the image during post-production and create stunning results – or use the soft light to produce quiet, evocative images.



top River Dart, Devon. The colours of autumn foliage can literally glow on an overcast day – especially if you use a polariser. Pentax 67 with 55mm lens, Fuji Velvia ISO 50, 2sec at f/11, polariser

bottom Chase Woods, Dorset. The low light levels in dull weather also make it easier to blur moving water with a slow shutter speed. Pentax 67 with 45mm lens, Fuji Velvia ISO 50, 4sec at f/11, polariser

PRO TIPS

» On cloudy days there may not be any direct sunlight, but the sky can still be interesting. To retain the detail and drama in the sky, use a 0.6 or 0.9 ND grad. You can always darken it a little more during post-production, if necessary.

» You can produce beautiful, fine art coastal images on overcast days by using a 10-stop or similar ND filter to increase the exposure to several minutes. The sea

is smoothed out to match the sky and this creates a perfect backdrop to static features such as piers and jetties.

» I favour Silver Efex Pro for black & white conversion, and often use the high structure presets on shots taken in dull weather (google.com/nikcollection). The tonal contrast preset in Color Efex Pro can also be very effective on dull day shots because it boosts contrast and colour.

LIGHT DIRECTION

Not only must you consider the overall quality of the light when shooting landscapes, but also the direction it's coming from in relation to the scene and your camera. This has a profound effect on how much or little texture and modelling is revealed, how high contrast is and how strong the colours appear.

Frontal lighting, created when the sun is behind the camera, is ideal for revealing detail and colour, but depth and form is lacking because shadows fall away from the camera and out of sight. Polarising filters are also less effective because the area of sky where polarisation is highest is found at right angles to the sun. The only time frontal lighting does work well is at sunrise and sunset, when scenes are bathed in a golden glow and look stunning – though with the sun so low in the sky, shadows are long and you may have problems keeping your own shadow out of the picture if you're using a wideangle lens.

Choosing your angle

A more effective option is to keep the sun on one side of the camera so light strikes the scene at a right angle. This is particularly effective when the sun is close to the horizon during the morning and evening as shadows rake across the scene, revealing texture and adding a strong sense of depth to your photographs. Polarising filters also give the strongest effect on side-lit scenes.

Another alternative is to shoot into the light or *contre jour*. When the sun is low in the sky, this approach can create stunning results. At the same time, it's one of the trickiest lighting techniques in landscape photography because contrast is maximised and the chance of getting the exposure wrong is increased due to the excessive brightness of the sun and sky.

Metering for the light

If you rely on your camera's metering system to determine exposure, the reading obtained will be influenced by the brighter parts of the scene, and any solid features will probably record in silhouette because they're in shadow – statues, trees, buildings and so on. This effect can work well, especially at sunrise and sunset when the golden sky creates a beautiful backdrop. If you set out to produce silhouettes, be sure to keep the composition simple, otherwise you'll end up with a confusing muddle of overlapping black shapes.

To create a backlit effect when shooting into the sun, all you have to do is meter for the shadows so the highlights overexpose – a great technique to try in woodland with sunlight bursting through the trees, or in misty weather. The easiest way to do this is by gradually increasing the exposure in 1/3-stop increments, using your camera's exposure compensation facility, until the image looks right. This may require dialling in +2 stops or more of exposure compensation.



top Near Pienza, Tuscany. Frontal lighting is good at revealing rich colours, but images can easily look flat.
Canon EOS 1Ds MkIII with 17-40mm, ISO 100, 1/8sec at f/22, polariser

bottom Longhoughton, Northumberland. Shooting into the light creates an atmospheric, backlit effect – but watch your exposures.
Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 17-40mm, ISO 400, 1/50sec at f/8

PRO TIPS

» If you're having problems with flare when shooting into the light, give your lens and filters a clean. If that doesn't work, hide the sun behind something in the scene – a tree or building, perhaps.

» I always set my DSLR to aperture priority mode and use multi-zone metering (evaluative metering in the case of Canon DSLRs). I find this combination of settings ideal for coping with all types of lighting situations, and I can use exposure compensation as and when necessary to correct errors.

» As well as checking the preview image for a shot you've just taken, also check the histogram as this gives a more accurate indication – ideally the histogram should be weighted to the right.

» I tend to leave my DSLR's white balance set to auto white balance when shooting in daylight, as it copes well with changes in the light. The other option is to use daylight white balance, which has a fixed colour temperature. If you're shooting in Raw, it doesn't matter either way because you can change the colour temperature of the image during processing.

SHOOTING SCENES IN LOW LIGHT

The sun doesn't have to be in the sky in order for you to take great landscapes. Before sunrise and after sunset there's still light, it's just in much shorter supply. Don't let that stop you though. Thanks to the instant feedback digital imaging gives us, and the amazing capability of the sensor in your camera, you can still record awesome images when there's barely enough light to see!

An extreme example of this is shooting star trail images at night using exposures of several hours, or capturing the Milky Way with your fastest lens set to its widest aperture. Photographers rarely bothered trying shots like this in the days of film because they were so hit and miss, but these days astrophotography is hugely popular. The same applies with capturing the northern lights (aurora borealis). A decade or so ago, you rarely saw images of the aurora. Now you can go on aurora photo workshops! Why? Because it's relatively easy to take successful shots of the phenomenon with a tripod-mounted DSLR. Get it wrong first time and you know almost immediately, so you can correct any error there and then, and keep doing so until you get a successful result.

Less extreme is the shooting of landscapes and seascapes at twilight, when the only daylight left is being reflected from the sky. Coastal scenes work especially well at twilight because the sea picks up colour from the sky, which can be anything from

orange to blue depending on the weather conditions, the direction you're facing and how long ago sunset was – or how soon sunrise is. You'll need a 0.6 ND grad on your lens to balance the sky with the rest of the scene, but other than that it's a case of setting your camera to aperture priority mode, stopping the lens down to f/11 or f/16 and opening the shutter. The camera will do the rest.

Urban landscapes look amazing at twilight, because as well as colour in the sky you also have the wonderful colours created by manmade illumination. Okay, this article is about natural daylight, but there's nothing to stop you combining that with artificial illumination if it results in great images. Light is light, right?

Twilight is the best time to shoot urban night scenes because there's still enough natural light being reflected from the sky to fill in the shadows, but it's also dark enough for the manmade light to show up in all its vibrant glory. Exposures tend to be anywhere between 10 and 30 seconds at f/11 and ISO 100, so you'll need to mount your camera on a sturdy tripod. I keep shooting until the last drops of colour fade from the sky, though in busy towns and cities you'll often find that your DSLR records some weird and wonderful colours in the sky when your eyes see only black. That's due to light pollution. Normally we try to avoid it like the plague, but at night it can actually be your ally as it adds interest to what would otherwise be a dark, boring sky!



TAKE PART! Enter our 'natural light landscapes' competition – turn to page 111 for details

8 STEPS TO SUCCESS

- 1 Don't wait for the sun to shine – just get out there with your camera and make the most of whatever weather you encounter.
- 2 Try to avoid chasing the light. Get to your location nice and early so you have time to scout, think and set up before the magic begins. There's nothing worse than reaching your destination just as the sun rises, or sets.
- 3 Be gracious in defeat. You can't expect to capture amazing light every time you step outside. If it were that easy, landscape photography would be boring!
- 4 Get into the habit of observing the light – notice how it changes and how those changes affect the character and appearance of the landscape.
- 5 Shoot in different types of light. If you're a big fan of the golden hour, make a point of shooting in the middle of the day. You can take great photographs at any time of day if you match the subject and technique to the light.
- 6 Keep an open mind and be willing to adapt to the conditions. Head out with plan A in mind but have a plan B or plan C up your sleeve in case the light/weather changes.
- 7 Use filters to get your images as close to finished in-camera as you can – ND grads are a must for controlling contrast and a polariser for improving clarity, contrast and colour. A 10-stop ND can also be a godsend in flat light.
- 8 Be prepared to get up early and stay out late. The best light of the day is usually during the first and last hour. In sunny weather, use the middle of the day to recce new locations.



QUICK GUIDE TO...

Abstract landscapes

There's more to landscape photography than sweeping vistas – scenics on a much smaller scale can be equally appealing, as Lee Frost demonstrates

Like most landscape photographers, I tend to see the world on a large scale. When I go out with my camera, my main priority is usually to capture a grand vista or a sweeping panorama. Over the years, however, I've discovered that while the 'bigger picture' undoubtedly leads to dramatic photos, details in the landscape can also be the source of beautiful and inspiring images because they capture aspects of a location that tend to be missed – the patterns, textures and colours fashioned by nature.

Details also provide much more scope for personal interpretation. Famous views have been photographed many times, so it's hard to shoot them without being influenced by familiarity. But with details this is rarely the case because you wouldn't travel to a location specifically to shoot patterns on a rock or ripples on a beach – they tend to be an added bonus of being there and looking beyond the obvious.

HOW TO SHOOT ABSTRACT LANDSCAPES

» There are two ways to interpret the term 'abstract' photographically. One is to create images that don't attempt to represent external reality, but instead achieve their appeal using shapes, colours and textures. The other is to isolate interesting details in the landscape so they can be appreciated separately from the bigger picture.

» When you're composing a photograph, think carefully about what you include and exclude. Adopt a 'less is more' approach and go for simplicity rather than filling the frame with clutter. The final image needs to be immediately eye-catching and arresting, otherwise it will fail to hold the viewer's attention.

» You can use any type of lens to shoot abstract landscapes. If you're able to get physically close to your subject matter, then a standard zoom

such as an 18-55mm (24-70mm on full-frame) will be fine. I also favour my 70-300mm telezoom for pulling in more distant details and compressing perspective to emphasise repetition.

» To make composition easier, and to allow you to consider your images more carefully before tripping the camera's shutter, mount your camera on a tripod. If you're shooting details at close range you'll also need to stop your lens down to f/16 or f/22 so there's enough depth of field to record everything in sharp focus.

» All types of light suit abstract landscapes. I favour the softer light of bright, overcast weather because low contrast makes it easier to capture fine details and subtle colours. That said, bright sunlight can also work well, and the stronger shadows it casts are ideal for revealing texture or simply adding to the abstract appeal of the image.

FIVE ESSENTIAL TIPS

1

You can find abstract landscapes anywhere, so no specific type of location or scenery necessarily works better than another – it's a matter of personal preference. I particularly like looking along the coastline because it's packed with potential.

2



Landscape details and abstracts are well suited to soft light, so dull, grey, miserable days are ideal. In other words, when grand views look rubbish and the sky is grey, take a more intimate look at the landscape.

3

Don't be afraid to do a little tidying up to improve a shot. Remove items, add items, splash water over dry rocks if they look better wet, use a paintbrush to remove debris (I always carry a small paintbrush for this purpose).

4



Shooting from different viewpoints and angles can make a big difference to the final image. Get higher up or lower down, tilt the camera to a jaunty angle – the more you move away from convention, the more abstract the results will be.

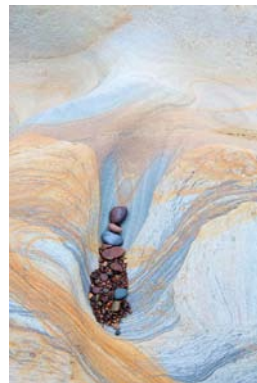
5

Images can be improved during post-production, if necessary. Cropping often makes a big difference. If colours are naturally subdued, boosting colour vibrance is also worth trying. Alternatively, consider converting to black & white.



CAPTURING OFF-THE-SCALE IMAGES

Excluding any sense of scale from your compositions encourages the viewer to use their imagination, and this can lead to all sorts of fascinating interpretations. A close-up of the patterns on a rock the size of your hand may appear like an aerial photograph taken from thousands of metres above Earth, or an image from a spy satellite; ripples on a sandy beach look surprisingly like a vast desert; a small trickle in a river could be a towering waterfall cascading over cliffs. Of course your intention isn't to fool anyone, but by removing any sense of scale from your images that's exactly what can happen, and it makes those images all the more interesting because they force the viewer to take a closer look and try to fathom out exactly what's going on!





By shooting into the sun on a stormy day, Pete Bridgwood translates a magnificent mountain vista into a simple and dramatic image that speaks clearly to the viewer

Creating photographs with feeling is a huge challenge for landscape photographers. Our ultimate goal is to communicate the sum total of our sensory interpretations of the scene through a single sensory visual conduit, to the viewer of our final print. Humans are sentient creatures; like any other conscious animal we are aware of our surroundings and able to sense our environment. But with sentience comes the ability to subjectively feel and experience emotion. Our capacity for individual subjective experience, moulded by millions of previous experiences and beliefs, is what makes us all unique, and it's why the creative visual arts offer such a rich and engaging tapestry.

Any subjective experience depends on comparisons and contrasts with what is already known. Luckily for landscape photographers, most adults living in the western world share a common degree of exposure to television,

film, advertising, more historic visual arts and, of course, our planet itself. Because of this shared exposure, despite the seemingly infinite number of possible interpretations for any single image, there are certain characteristics that tame our vast sentient subjectivity; together, they form the visual language we call landscape photography. Like any other language, this is something that can be learned, and something that can be mastered; once fluent, communication occurs at a subconscious level for both photographer and viewer. Our 'dialect' is shaped by our photographic style, and some dialects are easier to understand than others, but the basic vocabulary that forms our language is generic and understood by everyone.

Chamonix in the French Alps is devastatingly beautiful; magnificent and threatening in equal measures, and my challenge was to communicate this in a single image. Shooting directly into the sun, diffused by the stormy cloudscape, has had

three important consequences: first, it has desaturated the landscape into a melancholic, monochromatic indigo; second, it has thrown vast areas of foreground into shadow to minimise unnecessary textural distractions; and third, it has intensified overall contrast, helping to invoke drama by emphasising the brilliant sun against the *chiaroscuro* silhouetted foreground. To continue my linguistic analogy, shooting *contre jour* has greatly simplified the vocabulary for this image; simple compositions are easier to understand at a more direct subconscious level because they don't require as much translation. In the language of landscape photography, as with great poetry, there is beauty in simplicity.

Chamonix, France.
Canon EOS 1Ds MkIII with Canon EF 24-105mm
f/4L IS USM lens at 24mm, ISO 100, 1/50sec at f/8,
Lee 4-stop ND grad, handheld



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BIG TIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR: JERSEY & OFFSHORE REEFS

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Rob Fraser

Perhaps best known for his monolithic Himalayan panoramas, Rob Fraser is also committed to telling the stories of the people he meets on his travels. Nick Smith talks to him about his work and the importance of being curious

NICK SMITH We think of you as a mountain photographer, but that's not the whole story, is it?

ROB FRASER Certainly not. It's true that for the past 30 years, since I first got involved with photography, I've been interested in landscapes – particularly wild landscapes – but over the past five years or so I've become interested in and curious about the people I meet on my journeys. I'm a lot more focused now on telling stories through images.

NS This comes across very strongly in your new Land Keepers project...

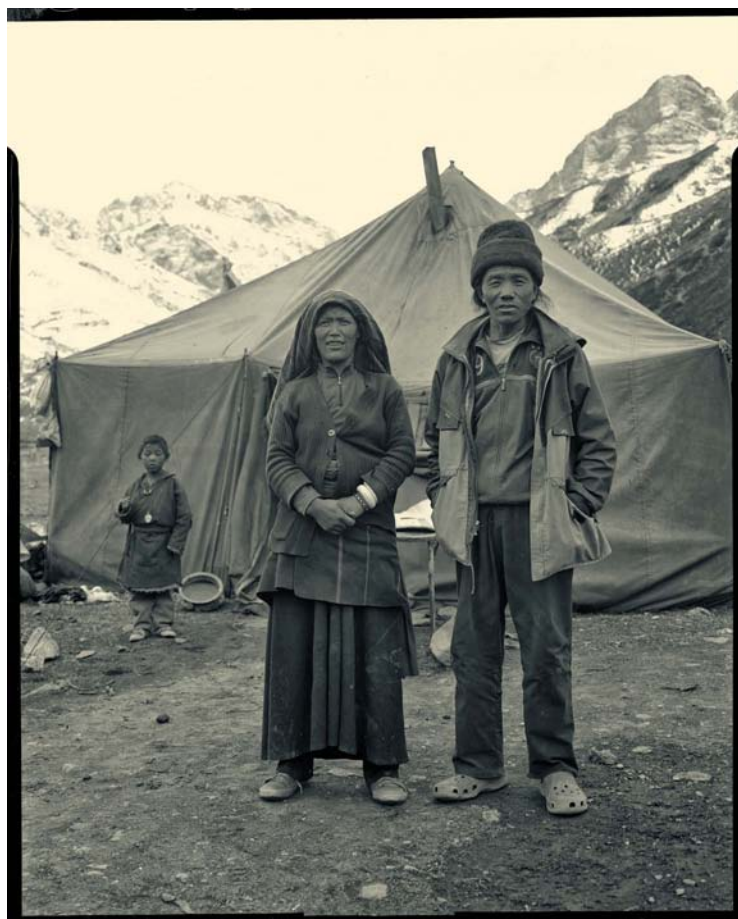
RF Well, I developed the project a few years ago with my wife Harriet (who wrote the words) to look at the culture of hill farming in Cumbria. We both walk the mountains regularly, but we didn't really know what went into making the landscape. There's this misconception that it is a wilderness, but in fact it is a managed landscape that has been developed over the past 1,100 years by hill farmers. So we wanted to deliver a project that examined their lives.

NS You're using some old-fashioned equipment on this project...

RF About five years ago I bought a Horseman 5x4 plate camera. It's large format, and you insert the plates in the back. I like the way I am forced to use the camera. It is much more considered than snapping off hundreds of images on a digital camera. It's a case of setting up on a tripod and giving the background real consideration. I set the background up and then ask the subject to step into view and then work around that. It's a more engaging way of doing things.



Samburu warriors, Kenya



Shey Gompa, Dolpo, Nepal



Anthony Hartley, Turner Hall farm, Duddon Valley, for the Land Keepers project



Lady, Markha Valley, northern India

NS So it's not just a case of being a bit of a retro gear aficionado?

RF It's not very practical. I mean, if I was looking at practicalities it would be a lot easier to shoot on a DSLR. But when you do that it's too easy just to focus on the person in the middle or the herd of yak in the Himalaya. With the plate camera you look at everything: what goes on in the background, what goes on at the edge of the frame. This is important because I like to show the image as it appears straight out of the camera. I even print the rebate.

NS How do you feel about not knowing if you've captured the right image?

RF I was recently in western Nepal, where I shot 13 portraits, and I didn't get to see

the images for around two months, when I eventually got back to the dark room. I had that old-school joyous feeling of apprehension, when you just don't know. Most of the stuff comes out okay, though – it's just a question of weeding out what I don't want.

NS What's the most important thing about your work?

RF There is something I'd like to think I've carried through my career, and that's the idea of being curious about what I am doing. I'm trying to find what tickles my curiosity and then capture it on film. I like the idea that film is an organic object in time and space that you can work with. It's real.

ROB'S TOP TIPS

» **One thing I never go on a shoot without is....** a Fuji Instax camera for taking instant prints to hand to people as a small gift of thanks.

» **My one piece of advice would be to...** look with your eyes, not just the camera. Never stop looking and learning. It's that curiosity thing again.

» **Something I try to avoid is...** getting cold. Take all your warm clothes if you're going to be hanging around anywhere cold for a long time.

ROB'S CRITICAL MOMENTS

To see more of Rob's work visit robfraser-photographer.co.uk

1978 Bought my first SLR, a Zenit E.

1981 Employed as a photo reporter for my local newspaper in Tenby, Pembrokeshire.

1990 Became a freelance location photographer following six years in the RAF as a ground photographer.

2001 Undertook a two-month assignment in Peru and Chile working with Stephen Fry and a number of bears.

2004 Spent 30 days walking across the Lake District for my Walk in the Park project, shooting just two large format frames each day.

2014 Land Keepers exhibition tours to six venues, including the Royal Geographical Society, London.

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Inverie Bay, Highland, by Izabela Janusz

ACCESS RATING

These are based around an 'averagely fit' person. Below are loose guidelines to what the ratings mean (N.B. they are assigned by the author and not verified by OP. Walk distances are one-way only):



1/5 Easy access – you can pretty much get straight out of your car and quickly be at the viewpoint via good quality paths.



2/5 Some gentle walking – generally less than a half mile – is involved, which may be on mixed quality paths.



3/5 A walk of up to about two miles, over quite easy terrain.



4/5 Medium length hike – up to about four miles over mixed terrain, possibly with some quite steep gradients.



5/5 The most difficult access. Long hike over challenging terrain (e.g. mountains/summits/steep coastal terrain); or involves travelling over particularly extreme ground (e.g. scrambling on rocks/exposed coastal paths or mountain ridges) over any distance.

LOCATIONS GUIDE

42 Viewpoints of the month

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46 Viewpoints

- 3 Creise Highland
- 4 Arbor Low Derbyshire
- 5 Saltburn-by-the-Sea North Yorkshire
- 6 Mynydd Bychan Powys
- 7 Inverie bay Highland
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- 9 Trevoze Head Cornwall
- 10 Gunthorpe Bridge Nottinghamshire



Map plottings are approximate

Clevedon Pier, Somerset

Careful planning and preparation pay off for Stu Meech, as he captures an atmospheric sunset shot of Clevedon's historic pier

As a result of growing up by the coast in Dorset, I love being by the sea. This means I am often drawn to seaside locations such as Clevedon in Somerset, with its grade I listed Victorian pier – the only complete graded pier left in the UK.

Following many visits to Clevedon and other parts of this coastline during my time living in Bath, I know it looks its best during a mid to high tide, when the sea covers the unsightly mud below. I made this particular visit on a day in April when high tide coincided roughly with sunset; this enabled me to capture the sun setting out to the left of frame and nice side light on the pier.

The sea rises and falls quickly here – the Bristol Channel has the second highest tidal flow in the world – and I find it best to shoot with the tide coming in so that I have time to plan my composition. With this in mind, I would advise shooting higher up the beach, where there is less mud and you have access back to the shingle. I feel a visit should be organised for when high tide is slightly after sunset because the rocks, which work well as foreground subjects, are normally submerged by the time the sea is at its highest.

Because I wanted to include certain transient elements in the frame, I got down to Clevedon an hour or so before sunset to give myself plenty of time.

I composed this shot with the camera close to the water and kept the sun just out of the frame so that the gradient of light across the sky would be as strong as possible. I used a 0.9 hard grad ND to balance the exposure and later recovered some of the shadows in the pier in post-production. As well as including foreground interest, I wanted the shot to have a feeling of calm and serenity, so I added a 10-stop ND filter to smooth out the sea and show the reflections of the pier.

Even with an exposure of 30 seconds, by the time I had set up and captured the shot (composed, metered, added filters, exposed and reviewed the image), the sea had risen so much that it was very close to the camera – I was very happy I had got the shot I wanted in one take.

Later, after sunset, I waited for the tail end of the blue hour so that I could also get a shot of the pier with its lights reflecting back into the sea at the point when the tide was at its highest – another shot that had long been on my wish list.

As well as the viewpoint from the shingle beach, you can also shoot from the hill, further up the road, to capture the pier from above. For the more adventurous, it's possible to climb the rocks underneath the pier and shoot from below. Wherever you decide to shoot from, make sure you bring wellies, or you'll soon find you have wet feet and muddy shoes! ■

Nikon D300s with Sigma 10-20mm lens at 20mm, ISO 200, 30sec at f/11, Lee 0.9 hard ND grad, B+W 10-stop filter, cable release, tripod

12 miles from Weston-super-Mare | 15 miles from Bristol | ACCESS RATING

PLANNING YOUR TRIP



How to get there From the M5, exit at junction 20 and follow the B3133 into Clevedon, where you will almost immediately see brown tourism signs for the seafront/Victorian pier. There is on-street parking directly opposite the pier.

What to shoot Seascapes and architectural shots of the pier.

Best time of day Sunset and dusk, as the pier faces west; daytime for access on to the pier.

Nearest food/drink Moon & Sixpence pub, 15 The Beach, Clevedon, BS21 7QU, 01275 872443, moonandsixpenceclevedon.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation Moon & Sixpence – as above. Or Best Western Walton Park, Wellington Terrace, Clevedon, BS21 7BL, 01275 874253, waltonparkhotel.co.uk.

Other times of the year All year round for sunsets.

Ordnance Survey map LR 172

Nearby locations Burnham-on-Sea Low lighthouse (19 miles); Wells Cathedral (24 miles).







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**Above image by Valda Bailey®
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Ring of Brodgar, Orkney

Keen to expand his portfolio of Scotland's famous Ring of Brodgar, Mark Ferguson sets about photographing the imposing Neolithic stones beneath a rising full moon

At the heart of Orkney's UNESCO World Heritage Site lies the Ring of Brodgar, a Neolithic stone circle. It was built approximately 4,500 years ago and originally comprised 60 megaliths. Only 27 remain, and some are close to five metres in height. A considerable rock-cut ditch, up to three metres deep and seven metres wide, was also constructed around the outside of the stone circle. The purpose of the circle and ditch remains a mystery. Some believe it was used as an astronomical observatory, others think it may have served as some kind of ceremonial monument.

The stone circle sits on a narrow strip of land between the Harray and Stenness lochs. This open setting provides uninhibited views in all directions and ample opportunities to capture the stones in varied light and weather conditions. Living only eight miles away, I have availed myself of many such opportunities, but reviewing my portfolio last spring, it dawned on me that the only light I hadn't played with was moonlight. Thus my new project was hatched – to shoot the stones under a rising full moon.

On a clear April evening, I cycled to the stones. The moon was due to rise in the south-eastern sky shortly after sunset so, all things going well, I would see it rise above the stones at dusk. Having set up my heavy zoom lens on a tripod and found a suitable composition, I encountered my first obstacle – the



ubiquitous Orkney wind. The second challenge was trying to get both the stones and the moon in sharp focus. This was clearly not possible in one exposure, so I decided to take two consecutive shots – one focused on the moon, the other on the stones – and combine them later in processing. As for exposure, I spot-metered on the moon so that it wouldn't appear washed out, and waited

until the moon had risen above the stones; I had a 10-minute window to take my shots before the moon rose too high.

Cycling home, I pondered whether any of those huge megaliths could possibly mark the spot on the horizon where the moon rises or sets at certain times of the year. Maybe, just maybe, the Ring of Brodgar was used as a lunar observatory by ancient man... ■

Canon EOS 7D with Sigma 120-400mm lens at 120mm, ISO 100, 1/6sec at f/8, tripod; two images combined

6 miles from Stromness | 120 miles from Inverness | ACCESS RATING

PLANNING YOUR TRIP



How to get there The Ring of Brodgar is best accessed from the main Kirkwall to Stromness road, the A965. After about four miles from Stromness, take the B9055 for about two miles and you'll see the stone circle on your left. There's ample off-road parking on the right.

What to shoot The Ring of Brodgar is best shot under an interesting sky. Also consider night shots under the stars, as there is very little light pollution.

Best time of day Sunrise and sunset at any time of year; night-time in winter.

Nearest food/drink The Merkister Hotel, Harray, KW17 2LF, 01856 771366, merkister.com.

Nearest accommodation The Merkister Hotel – as above.

Other times of year The location offers superb potential year-round.

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 463

Nearby locations Standing Stones of Stenness (1 mile); Yesnaby sea cliffs (8 miles).

Creise, Highland

Creise and its neighbour Meall a'Bhùiridh are part of the Black Mount range of mountains.

The river Coupall is usually used as foreground for the iconic Buachaille Etive Mòr, but if you follow the river west from Coupall Bridge, it provides an excellent lead-in to the ridges and corries of Creise.

How to get there From Tyndrum, take the A82 north for 20 miles and then turn left on to Glen Etive Road. Pull in at the parking spot on the left, just before the Coupall Bridge, then walk westward along the river Coupall for a quarter of a mile, where the river turns to face Creise.

What to shoot Shoot down the river towards Creise and Meall a'Bhùiridh and across the river towards Stob Dearg.



© Paul Holloway

Best time of day Early mornings are best at this time of year, but late afternoon can be good as well.

Nearest food/drink The Kings House Hotel, Glencoe, PH49 4HY, 01855 851259, kingshousehotel.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation The Kings House Hotel – as above.

Other times of year Autumn and winter.

Ordnance Survey map LR 41

Nearby locations Glencoe (5 miles); Loch Etive (15 miles).



20 miles from Tyndrum | 82 miles from Glasgow

ACCESS RATING     

8 miles from Bakewell | 23 miles from Sheffield

ACCESS RATING     

Arbor Low, Derbyshire

Arbor Low is a Neolithic henge monument close to the village of Monyash. Unlike most henges, most of the stones lie flat, and it is unclear whether they were ever standing.

How to get there From Buxton, follow the A515 for 10 miles, until you reach the Monyash/Youlgreave turning on your left, near Parsley Hay. Turn in and take the first right. Arbor Low is on your right up a farm track. Car parking fees are paid via an honesty box.

What to shoot The lying stone henges photographed from inside the circle or from high above. Take time to visit Gib Hill, a Bronze Age burial mound that lies about 200m south-west of Arbor Low.

Best time of day Sunrise and sunset.

Nearest food/drink The Farmyard Inn, Main Street, Youlgreave, Bakewell, DE45 1UW, 01629 636221, farmyardinn.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation

The Farmyard Inn – as above.

Other times of year The location offers potential year-round and, because the surrounding area is a designated dark sky site, it is the perfect place to see the Milky Way, especially in August.

Ordnance Survey map OL 24

Nearby locations Lathkill Dale (3 miles); Wolfscote Hill (5 miles).



© James Grant





Saltburn-by-the-Sea, North Yorkshire

The coastal town of Saltburn-by-the-Sea is home to one of the UK's most elegant Victorian piers, a spectacular cliff lift, an expansive sandy beach, the towering Hunt Cliff and much more. There are superb views up towards industrial Teesside and the offshore wind farm. Closer to the pier, surfers ride the waves, providing yet another point of interest for photography.

How to get there There are many routes down to the seaside, but the easiest option is to take the Saltburn Lane turning off the A174, which skirts around

much of the town. Follow this road right to the end where, just before you reach Saltburn Road, you will see a car park on your left, allowing you to park right by the shore. There are further parking spaces on Saltburn Road to the left – and you can also drive up the hill to park near the top of the cliff railway on Marine Parade.

What to shoot Classic compositions down the pier and out to sea and side-on views of the pier from the beach; surfers riding the waves, minimalist seascapes and views towards industrial Teesside to the north-west and Hunt Cliff to the south-east.

Best time of day Dawn is best at this time of year, with the sunrise just clearing Hunt Cliff. With a little cloud cover, the light can be magical well after sunrise.

Nearest food/drink The Seaview, The Foreshore Building, Lower Promenade, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, TS12 1HQ, 01287 626585, theseaviewrestaurant.co.uk.

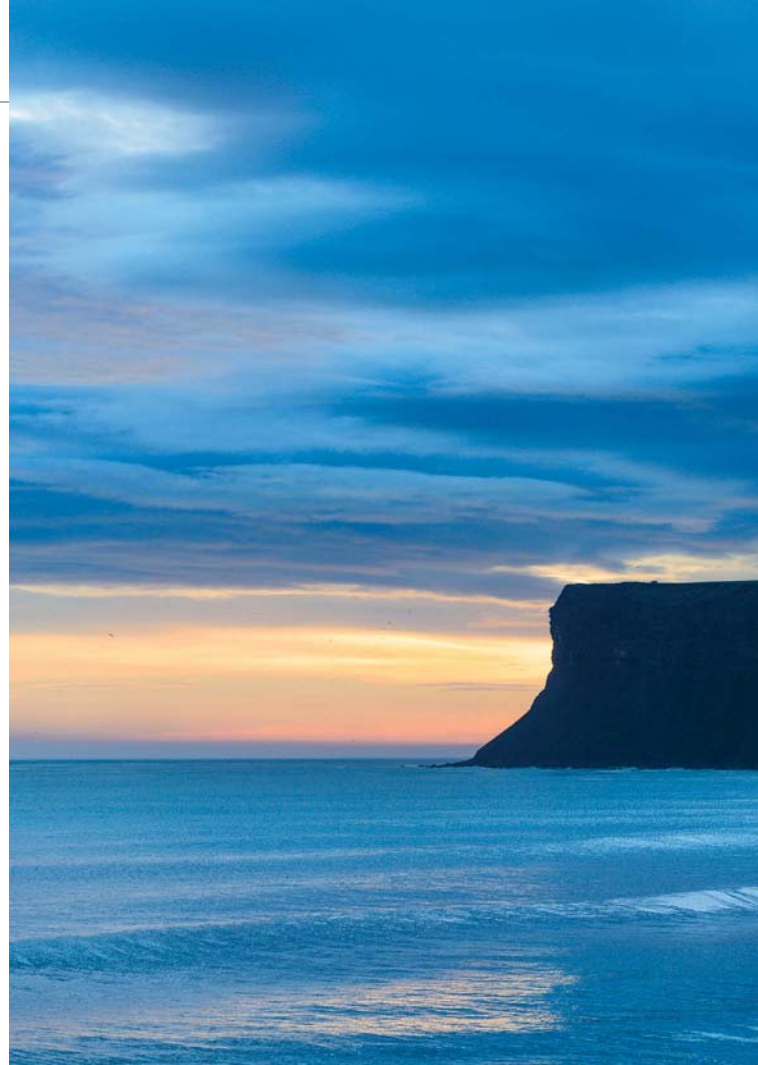
Nearest accommodation The Spa Hotel, Saltburn Bank, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, TS12 1HH, 01287 622544, thespahotelsaltburn.co.uk.

Other times of year Any time of year has potential.

Ordnance Survey map LR 94

Nearby locations Guisborough Priory (7 miles); Staithes (10 miles).

© Lizzie Shepherd



15 miles from Middlesbrough | 19 miles from Whitby | **ACCESS RATING**

12 miles from Brecon | 13 miles from Abergavenny | **ACCESS RATING**

Mynydd Bychan, Powys

Mynydd Bychan is a sharp ridge on the western side of the Black Mountains, with superb views towards the Welsh central uplands and the full escarpment of the Brecon Beacons. As well as being a good location for spectacular sunsets, weather systems can be observed from the ridge as they roll in from the west.

How to get there From Abergavenny, follow the A40 north-west towards Brecon, passing through Crickhowell. After about a mile, take a right fork on to the A479 and follow the road for about seven miles, until you reach the Dragons Back pub – you need to pay the landlord £1 to park here. Take the footpath alongside the A479 towards



Hay-on-Wye for 200m then turn right on to a lane. At the end of the lane, follow the footpath up over the ridge (Y Grib). Mynydd Bychan is the next ridge to the north – follow the path round to it.

What to shoot Mountain views, wild weather, sunsets and red kites.

Best time of day Any time, but later in the day is best for shooting into the light.

Nearest food/drink The Dragons Back (formerly the Castle Inn), Pengefnordd, Talgarth, LD3 OEP, 01874 711353, thedragonsback.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation The Farmers Arms, Cwmdy, Crickhowell, NP8 1RU, 01874 730464, the-farmers-arms.com.

Other times of year August for heather.

Ordnance Survey map OL 13

Nearby locations Langorse Lake (10 miles); Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal (27 miles).

© Brian Griffiths





© Izabela Janusz

Inverie bay, Highland

Inverie bay lies on the outskirts of Inverie, the main village on the Knoydart Peninsula. Situated in the western Highlands, opposite the Isle of Skye, Knoydart remains cut off from the British mainland road network. Inverie is accessible only by boat, or via a 16-mile walk across rough, uninhabited land. Wild and unspoilt, the area is often referred to as Britain's last wilderness.

How to get there From Fort William, take the A830 to Mallaig. From here, the easiest way to reach Inverie is by boat. There is a limited service in winter, and

during the summer months the boat goes twice a day – for a timetable visit knoydartferry.com. To reach the viewpoint shown in the photo, a half-hour uphill hike from the bay is required.

What to shoot The sun rising and setting over Inverie bay.

Best time of day Sunset.

Nearest food/drink The Old Forge, Inverie, Knoydart, Mallaig, PH41 4PL, 01687 462267, theoldforge.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation Knoydart Foundation Bunkhouse, Inverie, PH41 4PL, 01687 462163, knoydart-foundation.com/bunkhouse.

Other times of year Autumn for colourful foliage in the local woods and morning fog over the bay; winter for snowy hills.

Ordnance Survey map LR 33

Nearby locations Ladhar Bheinn (6 miles); Loch Hourn (6 miles).



7 miles from Mallaig | 50 miles from Fort William

ACCESS RATING     

2.5 miles from St Agnes | 9 miles from Truro

ACCESS RATING     

Chapel Porth beach, Cornwall

Chapel Porth is a quiet location set within a valley overlooking the ocean. All the elements are here for a dramatic seascape photograph, and a beautiful sunset completes the scene. The coastline is rugged, with steep cliffs to either side, and when the tide is out a surprisingly large beach is revealed. Rock formations and the geology of the land show nature at its best and provide useful foreground interest.

How to get there From the A30, exit on to the B3277, signposted St Agnes, and follow this road for about two and a half miles to a small junction. Turn left and follow the road to Chapel Porth. You will eventually reach a small car park on the left-hand side. From here, it is a short walk to the beach.

What to shoot Dramatic seascapes with protruding rocks in a variety of elevated or flat scenes; the old tin mines further along the coast.

Best time of day Late afternoon and

early evening to photograph the setting sun casting its glow.

Nearest food/drink Lewsey Lou's Fish & Chips, Trevaunance Road, St Agnes, 01872 552126, lewseylous.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation The County Arms Hotel, Highertown, Truro, TR1 3PY, 01872 273972, countyarmstruro.com.

Other times of year Autumn and winter can be good for sunset.

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 104

Nearby locations Wheal Coates (0 miles); Godreavy Head (13 miles).



© Russell Wilcox

Trevose Head, Cornwall

Trevose Head is a dramatic headland on Cornwall's Atlantic coastline, with steep, wave-battered cliffs. It is particularly spectacular at high tide when the sea is rough and the winds are blowing from the west. The impressive lighthouse stands high above the unfortunately named Stinking Cove.

How to get there From Padstow, take the B3276 in a south-westerly direction towards Newquay. After about two miles, turn right on to an unclassified road, signposted to Trevose Head. The final section of road is a toll road; the fee includes parking at the car park near the lighthouse.

What to shoot Dramatic cliffs, rough sea and the lighthouse; coastal flowers (including kidney vetch in April and May), and cliff nesting birds such as fulmar, shag and kestrel.

Best time of day Late afternoon and evening, as the headland faces west.

It's best to coincide your visit with a high tide.

Nearest food/drink The Harlyn Inn, Harlyn Bay, Padstow, PL28 8SB, 01841 520207, harlyn-inn.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation The Harlyn Inn – as above.

Other times of year Any time of year is good.

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 106

Nearby locations Bedruthan Steps (6 miles); the Rumps (18 miles).



© David Chapman



5 miles from Padstow | 20 miles from Bodmin

ACCESS RATING

12 miles from Nottingham | 13 miles from Newark

ACCESS RATING

Gunthorpe Bridge, Nottinghamshire

Gunthorpe Bridge is the only crossing over the river Trent between Newark and Nottingham, so the location is easy to access and can be popular, especially at weekends. Gunthorpe is located in the heart of the East Midlands, and offers good access for east Nottinghamshire, Lincoln and Newark. The bridge provides an elevated viewpoint for photos and on calm days, you get some great reflections in the river. There are also some varied walks in the area.

How to get there From Newark (A1), it's a 15-minute journey: take the A46 and turn off at the A6097 (Mansfield). Cross the bridge over the Trent, turn right and park at Riverside (signposted), outside the Unicorn Hotel. Walk along the road to the bridge, or stay on the path to take in the narrow boats. If you miss this turning, take the next right at the other end of the village.

What to shoot The river Trent and surrounding countryside from the bridge footpath – but beware of vibration from HGVs! If there's fog, try photographing the trees around the river. The nearby woods are good for wildflowers in spring.

Best time of day Early mornings and around sunset for the best light.

Nearest food/drink Unicorn Hotel, Trentside, Gunthorpe, NG14 7FB, 01159 663612, unicornhotelpub.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation Unicorn Hotel – as above.

Other times of year Summer for storms, canal boats and wildflowers along the river; autumn for sunsets and sunrises.

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 260

Nearby locations Ploughman's Wood (5 miles); Clumber Park (23 miles).



© David Eberlin



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Industrial song lines

A project to document the landscapes and people of Teesside leads Paul Harris to consider the compelling nature of places that speak of a rich industrial heritage

*'Tramline iron ore
Curtain of liquid steel
Red and gold
On the train today
Passing through that secret country
Of my grandfather's veins...'*

Chris Stewart bounced up on stage carrying his grandfather's huge black overcoat in his arms, which he then carefully wrapped around his shoulders. Fluffing his lines twice, he recovered then delivered an impassioned soliloquy about the trail known as the Black Path, a once busy thoroughfare crowded with workers on their way to a lifetime of steel and shipbuilding on Teesside. This was just the start of a colourful evening of performance poetry I had chosen to attend as part of my research on a project to document one of Britain's great industrial heartlands. Next up came a young Muslim poet recently returned from London, reciting an original ode to his home in Redcar off his iPhone.

The local library bristled with old maps and photographs of the Tees estuary. I chatted with kids on their BMX bikes in North Gare, and winkle picker Donny Webley in South Gare, long since retired from the nearby resurgent steelworks. I listened to the rattle of cranks and wheels of the transporter bridge echo through the morning mist, but those lines of poetry in a Middlesbrough social club last winter had fired me up to return to the now somewhat dishevelled Black Path. My aim was not simply to record neglect and decay, however, because around it new industry has grown up, and you can't help but feel a renewed spirit of place and a sense of belonging from those who have lived here for generations.

I have always wanted to ask photographers who have become openly obsessed with imagery of industrial decline and decay if they feel a little guilty or just a tad voyeuristic dissecting the rubble of people's ruined livelihoods – a feat brilliantly achieved by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre in their depiction of Detroit in ruins. Can we call it iconic, make highly detailed billboard-sized prints of peeling paint and rusted iron for the gallery and call it art? Or do we still call it art and go in completely the other direction: make it all disappear in a whirlwind of manipulation, leaving a bland landscape of

green and grey? Such was 'Rhein II', the world's most expensive photograph to date, masterfully created by German visual artist, Andreas Gursky.

Strangely, I didn't have any such crisis of conscience bumping through the deserts of northern Chile to see what remained of the Saltpeter refineries, one of the great industrial success stories of South America. Saltpeter, or sodium nitrate, was an ingredient in the manufacture of explosives and, later, of fertilisers that transformed agriculture in the Americas and Europe. Humberstone is one of only a handful of refineries that the desert has yet to consume. A whole town grew up around the industry and, at its height in the 1940s, it housed some 3,700 people. By 1959 its decline was complete. The mines closed and workers and their families retreated to coastal settlements. The spirit of this community glowed briefly in 2002, when some of those people returned to help raise its profile, filling the faded theatre, streets, balconies and plants with a two-day fiesta. Three years later, Humberstone and its outliers received World Heritage protection.

Heritage of any kind is big business these days, but traditional industry and its surrounding landscapes seem to get particular attention from preservation societies, photographers and writers alike. Industrial landscapes have provided the background for some of the most iconic and heroic imagery – a celebration of production,

wealth and energy. Look no further than Margaret Bourke-White's *Women of Steel* from 1943, Bernd and Hilla Becher's grand architectural portraiture from the 1970s and Brian Griffin's surreal portraits of Broadgate builders from the 1980s. Those were heady days, and the notion that one day many of these sites would be grassed over or left to rot simply wasn't considered.

Every so often there are chinks of light in the remnants of industry long gone. It might be some time before Detroit can rescue itself from its industrial ashes, but other great US cities such as Baltimore, Portland and San Francisco have managed considerable transformations where their industrial past shines through.

Photographing the old mine shafts and chimneystacks of Botallack near Land's End last year, with bluebells pushing through traces of engine room walls and a keen wind blowing off the Atlantic, it was easy to conjure up the lives of Cornish miners. Heritage aside, there appears to be life left in these mines as new technologies seek to extract recently discovered tin ores at a time when worldwide supplies are dwindling rapidly. Megan, a local farmer I stopped to have a chat with on my way back to my tent after a satisfying dawn shoot, wasn't so sure anything would come of this. 'But you keep taking pictures,' she demanded enthusiastically as she led her donkey down the stony track.

Poem by Chris Stewart @SideBurnedPoet





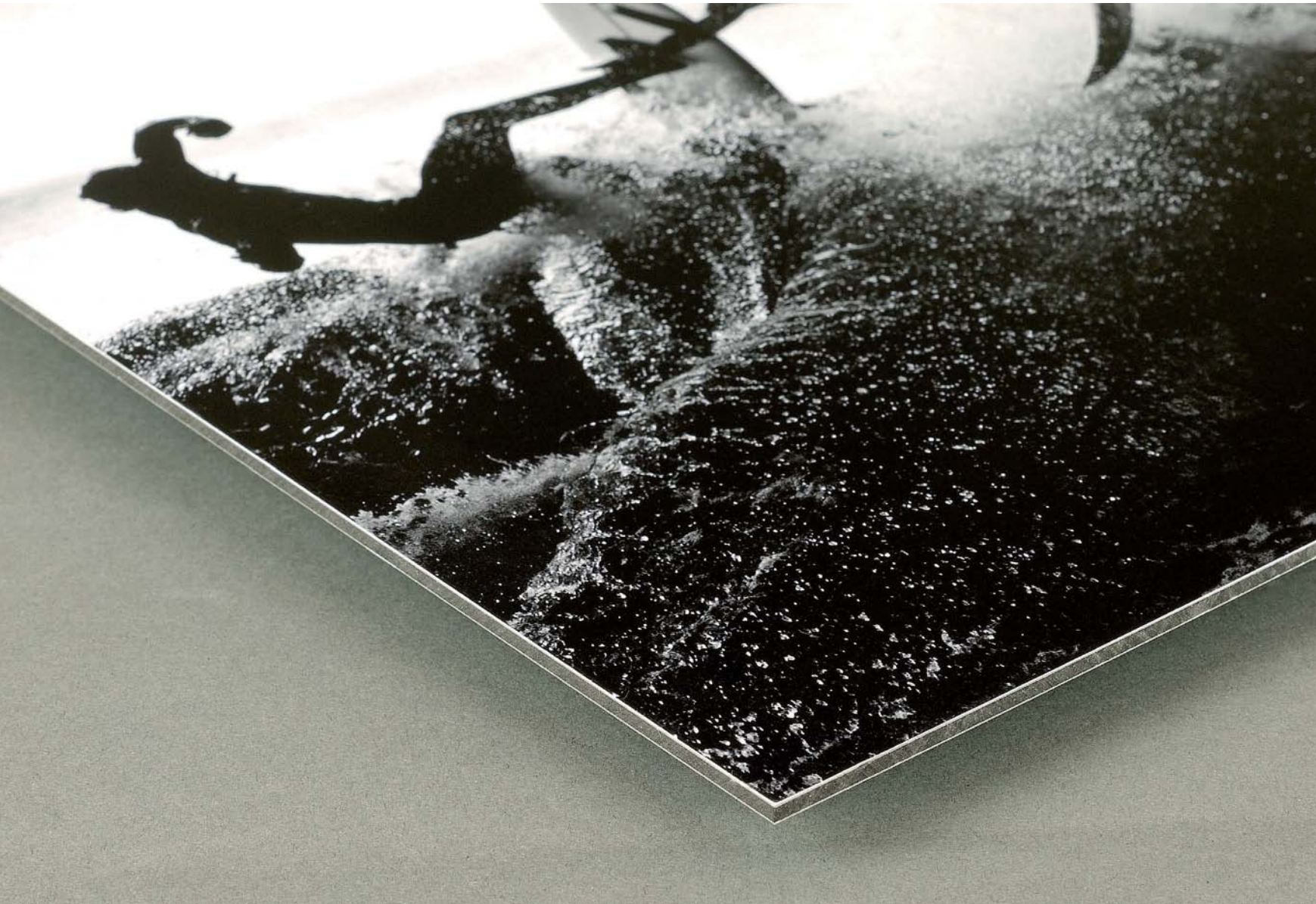
above Paddy's Hole, South Gare, Teesside.

below Redcar steelworks, South Gare, Teesside.

opposite Winkle picker Donny Webley, who worked for many years at the recently revived Teesside steelworks.



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Outdoor Photographer of the year 2014

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



We are delighted to reveal the overall winner of OPOTY 2014: UK photographer Greg Whitton. And, following our showcase of the category winners in the March issue, this month we bring you the stunning collection of commended images from the competition.

Press play and see the show's highlights.



Our fourth Outdoor Photographer of the Year competition ended on a high note, as Greg Whitton was revealed as the overall winner at the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show at ExCel, London, on 15 February. A large crowd gathered around the OP PhotoBox stage to watch the awards ceremony, hosted by OP editor Steve Watkins, including many of the category winners and judges.

With the standard of entries being so high this year, shortlisting the images and choosing the category winners was an incredibly tough process for the six judges (Steve Watkins, Pete Bridgwood, David Baker, Andy Luck, Tracy Hallett and Pete Webb). But Greg Whitton's stunning image of Iceland's southern highlands, which won the Light on the Land category, was the overwhelming favourite among the judges.

David Baker, who was the winner of OPOTY 2012, said: 'Greg's image shouts "outdoor photography". It's a huge vista – an epic big view. I think the winning image has to be one that goes beyond the competition – it's an emblem for the magazine and an inspiration for future entrants.'

Greg, who is an enthusiast photographer based in Solihull, wins an exclusive place on the Fjällräven Polar dogsled expedition in April, which will see him travelling over 300km across Arctic Scandinavia. On being presented with his award by British mountaineer Alan Hinkes OBE, Greg said, 'It's amazing. I honestly can't believe it.'

Talking about his photograph, which was taken during a six-day wild

camping trip in Iceland with four other photographers, Greg said: 'I took this picture on the last night of the trip. We hadn't had a moment of really good light during the whole six days. When we reached the top of this particular peak there was thick cloud blocking the sun. My camera battery was running out and I didn't have any spare in my pack, so I started to make the descent back to basecamp. After making my way about 50 metres down the mountain the clouds started to part slightly. The light only lasted a few minutes. I've got other photographs when the light became really epic, but for me this image, where the light is building, is more successful.'

Turn the page for our showcase of the commended images from OPOTY 2014, which demonstrate the outstanding quality of images entered into the competition. Enjoy!

above right Greg Whitton's winning photograph, 'Southern Highlands, Iceland'.
above left Greg with his image, and being presented with his award by Alan Hinkes OBE at the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show at ExCel, London.

Fjällräven Polar takes place from 6-11 April – you can follow the expedition live at fjallravenpolar.com. To watch the OPOTY awards ceremony and to find out more about the competition, visit opoty.co.uk.

COMMENDED IMAGES

LIGHT ON THE LAND

1 | **Marco Barone** (Italy)

I captured this photograph in the mountains around Petit Mont Cenis in Savoie in France. I went to this place many times to find the right weather conditions to capture the gloomy shot I'd had in mind for a while. On this occasion, I visited during a storm, and just before sunset the rain stopped. The light filtered through the clouds, creating the right atmosphere.

Nikon D300 with Tokina 11-16 f/2.8 lens at 13mm, ISO 100, 1/8sec at f/13, Sirui T-1005 tripod, post-processing with Nikon Capture NX, exposure adjustments, contrast, saturation and sharpening

500px.com/Marcobarone

2 | **Claire Carter** (UK)

Gimsøy, Lofoten Islands, Norway. April 2013 saw some of the deepest snow that this archipelago had experienced for many years. One snowstorm after another engulfed me, but the gaps between the storms provided exciting opportunities. On this occasion, the parting clouds briefly framed the mountain at dusk.

Camera EOS 5D MkIII with Canon 24-105mm L lens at 35mm, ISO 100, 1/15sec at f/18, tripod, post-processing to adjust white balance and enhance contrast

carterart.co.uk

3 | **Samuel Feron** (France)

This was taken in Iceland as the very last rays of sun hit the beach. A storm had just passed and only a very thin gap in the clouds let the light through, briefly illuminating the basalt rocks but leaving the rest of the scene dark and dramatic.

Canon EOS 5D MkII with EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 16mm, ISO 50, 2.5sec at f/22, Gitzo Mountaineer tripod, Swiss ballhead, post-processing included darkening and desaturating the sky, increasing saturation of the rocks

cubicsfer.com

4 | **Joe Wright** (UK)

Forest beech canopy. My intent was to portray the many facets and life stages of the beech – its structure and strength in the trunk along with the fine filigree of the canopy branches, young and ancient. All set against the cacophony of autumn colour.

Chamonix 45N-2 with Nikkor M 300 f/9 lens, Kodak Portra 400, 1sec at f/51, tripod, drum scanned, levels adjustment and film base cast neutralised in Photoshop

joewrightphotography.com





3



4

WILDLIFE INSIGHT



1 |



2 |



3



4

1 | **Joshua Holko** (Australia)

Photographed from a hidden snow blind in the extreme north-east of Iceland in the middle of winter, this arctic fox was stalking a gull. I'd spent a week photographing arctic foxes as they went about their daily lives.

Canon EOS 1DX with Canon 600mm f/4L IS MkII lens, ISO 400, 1/1600sec at f/4

jholko.com

2 | **Kevin Morgans** (UK)

I visited Lake Clark, Alaska, slightly too early in the season for the salmon run. Fortunately there were still a few salmon present in the estuary, and a big female grizzly bear offered up some stunning photographic opportunities as she tried to make a catch.

Canon EOS 1DX with 500mm f/4 lens, ISO 1250, 1/8000sec at f/4, handheld, post-processing: brought back the original colours that were in the scene, via the shadows, white and blacks. Increased vibrance and saturation, brought back the yellow and orange via the colour panel in Lightroom

kbmwildlife.com

3 | **Judith Conning** (Australia)

We'd had four days in a blizzard in Kaktovik, Alaska, and a small group of us were on a tiny boat, buffeted by the wind but totally captivated by the journey of a mother bear seeking a more sheltered site to feed her cubs.

Canon EOS 5D MkII with Canon 100-400mm lens at 250mm, ISO 800, 1/320sec at f/9, handheld, processed in Lightroom 5, cropped top and bottom, lightened exposure, added contrast, applied noise reduction and removed a tree stump

judeconningphotography.com

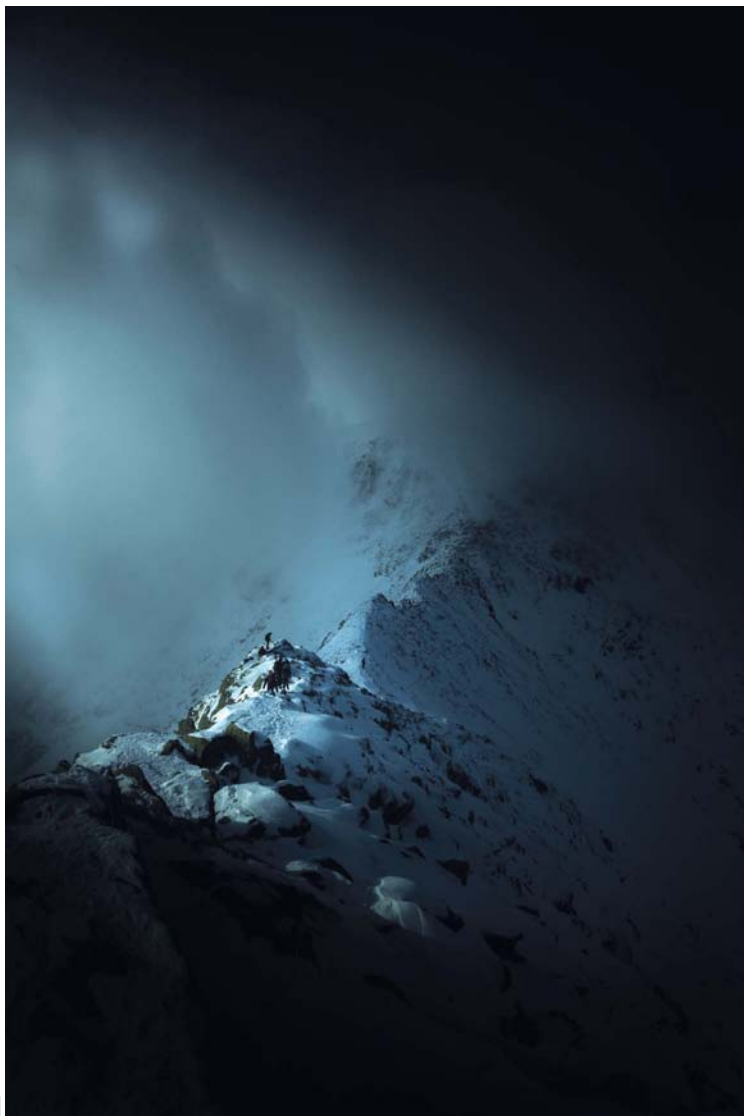
4 | **Michael Maes** (Belgium)

I was tracking this mother and cub near Churchill, Canada, for five days. Despite bad weather, I returned to them after dinner on my last day of filming, as I had pre-visualised a shot in the Arctic sunset light. One brief gap in the otherwise cloud-covered sky was my gift from Mother Nature.

Canon EOS 1DC with Canon 400mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens and Canon 2x MkIII extender at 800mm, ISO 1250, 1/100sec at f/5.6, Canon 52mm drop-in circular polariser, Manfrotto 509HD Video Head with 545B Tripod Legs, mid-spreader, Atomos Ninja II monitor, post-processing in Lightroom 5.6, cropped, set black and white points, increased exposure, contrast and saturation, mild sharpening, lens correction and chromatic aberration, set camera calibration profile

michaelmaes.com

LIVE THE ADVENTURE



1

1 | Greg Whitton (UK)

'The Ridge 1' is the first in a mini-series of images taken on UK mountains, which are processed in a manner intended to convey the often claustrophobic and threatening nature of these majestic lumps of rock. This image is from Striding Edge in the Lake District.

Panasonic LX5 at 5.1mm, ISO 80, 1/400sec at f/6.3, handheld, processed in Lightroom using curves, exposure, radial grad, colour temp and tint

gregwhittonphotography.com

2 | Jan Faßbender (Germany)

I love to combine sports with architecture and landscape in my pictures. This picture was taken at sunrise on a trip to the Grimberger Sichel pedestrian bridge in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, with Basti Aldehoff, a slackliner from Cologne. I was attracted by the combination of water, architecture and light, and captured the scene while lying in a rubber dinghy.

Canon EOS 5D MkII with 17-40mm lens at 29mm, ISO 100, 1/1000sec at f/5.6

janfassbender.de



2

3 | Ibraheem Al-Awadi (Egypt)

Located 100km south-west of Cairo in Egypt, Al Medawara mountain in the Faiyum oasis is an amazing place where earth meets the sky and opens a gate to the stars.

Canon EOS 5D MkII with 24-70mm lens at 28mm, ISO 3200, 35sec at f/2.8, a star tracker was used to allow long exposure, adjustments to contrast and saturation, and minor cross-processing

himtox.com

4 | Sandi Bertoncej (Slovenia)

It was an autumn afternoon when I went with friends on a cycling tour on Gubno Mountain, in the Karavanken Alps in Slovenia. We arrived at the summit half an hour before sunset, just in time to take the best photos. The light was awesome; the sun was shining through the thin clouds, causing long shadows, and mist was lifting from the valley. I asked my friend to ride on the ridge, and I took this shot from some distance away. I aim to capture the spirit of mountain biking and to show that it takes place in beautiful environments; in this case among the breathtaking mountains of the Alps.

Canon EOS 5D MkIII with Canon EF 17-40mm f/4 L USM lens at 21mm, ISO 400, 1/800sec at f/14, post-processing in Lightroom included minor cropping, white balance adjustments, exposure adjustments, sharpening, highlights, clarity and contrast

500px.com/berto



3



4

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

1 |



2 |



1 | **Lee Acaster** (UK)

It was a stormy day, but the shingle banks at Shingle Street in Suffolk create a natural harbour. There was a spectacular sunrise over the sea, but when I saw that the row of cottages opposite might be briefly illuminated against the dark, brooding sky I knew that was the shot I wanted.

Canon EOS 5D MkII with Canon 17-40mm f/4 L lens at 22mm, ISO 100, 180sec at f/9, Lee Big Stopper, Lee circular polariser, processed in Lightroom and Nik Sliver Efex, tonal adjustments, some minor elements (rooftops and telegraph poles) removed

leeacaster.com

2 | **David Wrangborg** (Sweden)

The light had broken through the clouds and was playing along the Isfjord coast of Svalbard. I often try to capture the magical polar light in its many forms. This was taken during a hike up Blomsterhøgda, outside Longyearbyen.

Pentax K-5 with Pentax-DA 55-300mm f/4-5.8 ED lens at 97.5mm, ISO 100, 1/20sec at f/8, tripod, post-processing included adjusted white balance and exposure and increased clarity

500px.com/DavidWrangborg

3 | **Samuel Feron** (France)

One of the difficulties related to this kind of image is that the piece of ice has to be perfectly motionless during the exposure. This is a challenge because the incoming waves are usually strong and tend to move the ice around.

Canon EOS 5D MkIII with Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 70mm, ISO 160, 10sec at f/20, Gitzo Mountaineer tripod, Swiss Ballhead, post-processing included increasing contrast, desaturation of the blue

cubicsfer.com

4 | **Joe Wright** (UK)

The floods #1. This image was taken as part of an ongoing project in my local, ordinary woodland, which coincided with the prolonged periods of heavy rainfall that led to some of the wettest years in history in the UK.

Canham 8x10 Standard field camera with Fuji Fujinon W 250mm f/6.7 lens, Kodak Portra 160NC, 1sec at f/64, tripod, drum scanned, levels adjustment and film base cast neutralised in Photoshop

joewrightphotography.com



3



4

SMALL WORLD



1 | **Johannes Klapwijk** (Netherlands)

When the light of the sun becomes too harsh, I start playing with reflections of the sunlight in water and underexpose for a moody effect. Here, I used out-of-focus vegetation to frame the dragonfly.

Canon EOS 5D MkII with Sigma 150mm f/2.8 macro lens, ISO 125, 1/5000sec at f/2.8, 2-stops underexposed, tripod

johannesklapwijk.com

2 | **Giovanni Maurizi** (Italy)

One day last spring, two of my friends led me along a river near the town where I live in Italy to see this grass snake.

Nikon D800E with 105mm lens, ISO 100, 1/500sec at f/6.3, fill-flash, post-processing included subtle contrast enhancement via curves, sharpening

3 | **Giannis Gogos** (Greece)

Forests are my favourite environments for photography; they are an endless source of inspiration. When I am out there, I try to hike slowly, closely observing everything around me. I took this photo on an early autumn morning in a forest in north-east Greece. These little wildflowers immediately caught my attention. I lay down and set my camera on the ground. I used a telephoto lens with a large aperture because I wanted to use the depth of field creatively. Soft light complemented these little flowers for only a few minutes.

Canon EOS 7D with Canon EF 70-200mm f/4 L USM lens at 163mm, ISO 400, 1/400sec at f/4, post-processing included minor adjustments to colour balance, blacks and contrast in Photoshop

giannisgogos.com

4 | **Nagy Lehel** (Romania)

It was a cold autumn morning, and the sun had just peeked over the hills, bathing everything in beautiful orange light – it was the first sunshine after weeks of constant rain.

Canon EOS 600D with Super Takumar 50mm f/1.4 manual lens, ISO 400, shutter speed not recorded, f/2, handheld, post-processing included darkening tones, and increasing saturation and contrast

500px.com/NagyLehel





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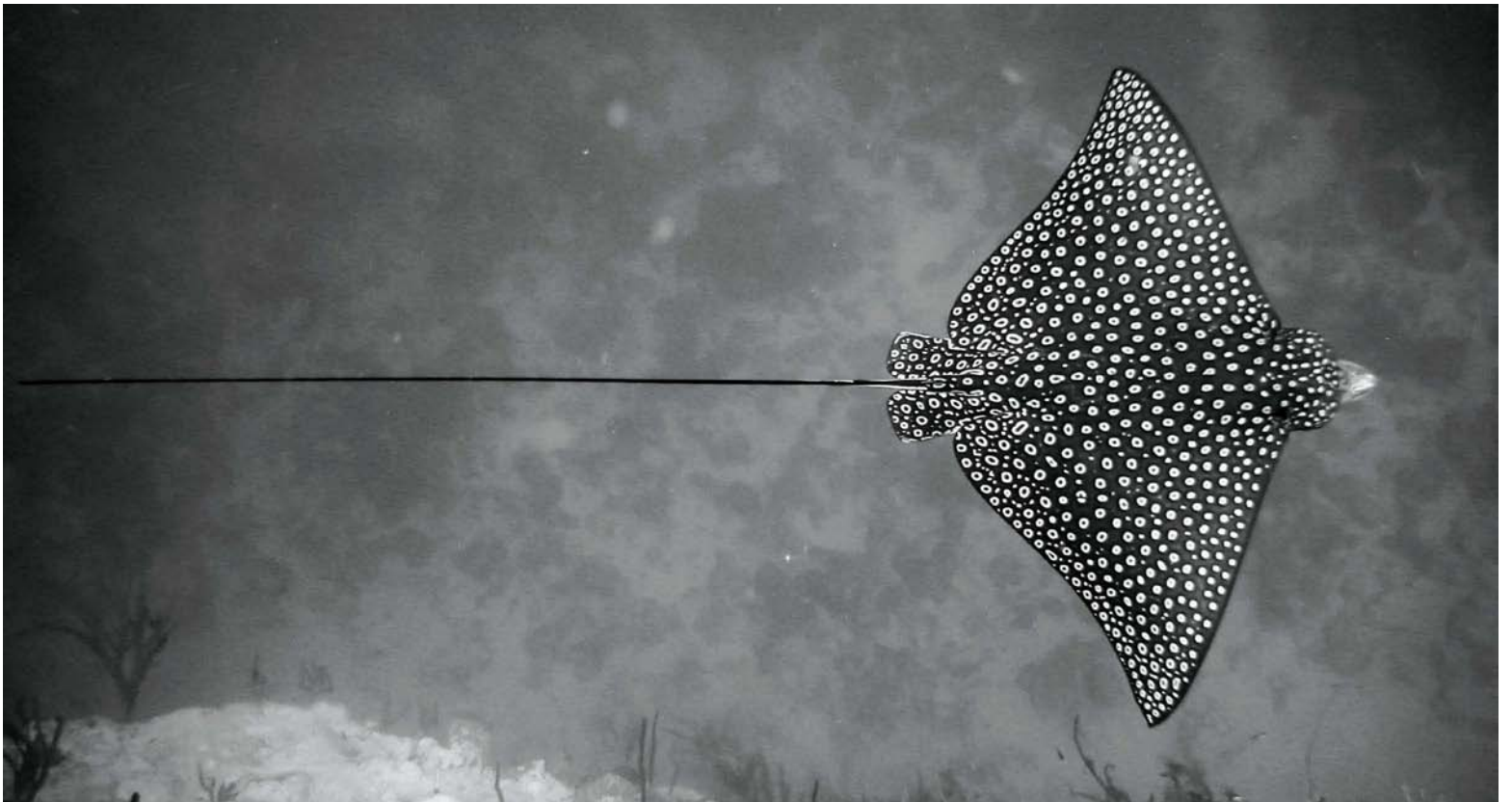


4

UNDER EXPOSED



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1 | **Joe Daniels** (UK)

This very co-operative lionfish was shot under Air Manis jetty, which is located inside Ambon Bay on Maluku, Indonesia. The jetty and old fishing boats create a spectacular light show around midday as the light streams through the structure.

Canon EOS 7D with Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens at 12mm, ISO 200, 1/125sec at f/8, Nauticam housing, Ikelite ds160/i61 strobes, post-processing included increasing contrast and spot removal

jldaniels.co.uk

2 | **Matt Burden** (UK)

During an early morning dive off the coast of Belize, I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, as three spotted eagle rays passed below me. I converted this image to black & white to focus on the symmetry and pattern of one of the rays. I then cropped it in such a way as to accentuate my intent of filling the frame; I believe this does justice to the beauty of the ray.

Sony WX100 with lens at 7.9mm, ISO 100, 1/125sec at f/2.8, converted to black & white and cropped in Lightroom and Photoshop

3 | **Steve de Neef** (Belgium)

This marine protected area at Apo Island in the Philippines is known to have many green sea turtles, which come to feed here. While snorkelling, I swam towards the deeper blue water and encountered this individual. It seemed interested in its own reflection in my dome port, as it swam right up to me and bumped my camera before slowly swimming away into the blue.

Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 15mm lens, ISO 320, 1/125sec at f/16, underwater housing

stevedeneef.com

4 | **William Goodwin** (USA)

I took this shot hanging upside down and holding my breath 75 feet down at Margate Bay, on the south-west coast of Bonaire in the Netherlands Antilles. I was careful not to touch the sponge with my camera or light, in order to prevent frightening the tiny shrimp or loosening image-spoiling detritus. I operated the camera with one hand while holding a video light to illuminate the interior through the sponge wall.

Sony NEX 5N with 18mm-55mm lens at 37mm, ISO 800, 1/80sec at f/8, Acquapazza housing, interior lit with a UW Kinetics Light Canon full brightness (no strobe), post-processing included slight colour adjustment, a little dodging/burning, and removal of a few specks with the clone tool

thefirstanimal.blogspot.com



3



4

YOUNG OPOTY

1 |



2 |



1 | **Jenaya Launstein** (Canada)

I was following this grizzly bear with my lens while it fished in the rain, and just as it was leaving the water to move upstream it took a swipe at a passing salmon. I was excited to have the gull perched on the boulder beside it, and I love the colours of the foliage. I would love to return to the Chilkoot River one day.

Nikon D7000 with Nikkor AF-S 200-400mm f/4G IF-ED VR lens at 350mm, ISO 500, 1/400sec at f/5.6, FEISOL Elite CT-3372 Rapid Carbon Fibre tripod with Acratech GV-2 Ballhead and Wimberley Sidekick, converted using Phase One Capture One Pro 7, minor corrections to colour balance and contrast in Photoshop CS5, cropped to panorama aspect ratio

launsteinimagery.com

2 | **Laurent Dumas** (France)

It was a rainy afternoon and I was sitting on the edge of the cliff waiting for razorbills to land. The wind was blowing and the light just started to improve, but the razorbills didn't seem to want to come in. I turned my attention to the kittiwakes down the cliff, which were dancing in the waves and fighting the wind. I have to confess that I was pretty moved by these birds, which were giving me a clear lesson in courage; showing me how wildlife can combine with the elements to give a memorable ballet.

Nikon D7000 with lens at 125mm, ISO 640, exposure details not recorded

3 | **Spencer Cox** (USA)

I took this image after scrambling across mossy rocks on a rainy morning at Lower Greeter Falls in Tennessee, USA. I wanted to frame the waterfall with trees to create a calm composition. I was lucky; I have never again seen this much water flowing over the falls.

Nikon D7000 with Nikon 24mm f/1.4 lens, ISO 100, 0.8sec at f/8, tripod, processed in Lightroom 4, tilt correction and slight crop, colour temperature adjustments, sharpening, highlight recovery, minor colour and contrast changes (including local adjustments), and global brightness decrease

spencercoxphoto.com

4 | **Will Hawkes** (UK)

I was meant to be photographing the fallow deer rut at dawn, but as I tried to sneak into a better position this pheasant stuck his head out of the dew-covered grasses. I quickly shifted position to get down to the pheasant's level, before composing to include the beautiful, web-covered grass.

Nikon D300s with 55-300mm lens at 300mm, ISO 400, 1/640sec at f/5.6, handheld

willhawkesphotography.com

5 | **Alice Smith** (UK)

I always carry my camera with me when checking the stock on my parents' farm, and it just so happened that this time I was in luck. This lonely hare was enjoying its meal of winter wheat.

Canon PowerShot SX30 IS with lens at 150.5mm, ISO 80, 1/250sec at f/5.8, rested camera on quad bike handles

alic679.wix.com/atsmithphotography



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5

A photographer's guide to life on Earth

For the past 15 years, Chris Weston has enjoyed a successful career in wildlife photography. Far from the end of his journey, he is about to embark upon a radical new adventure – one that may inspire each of us to fulfill our potential as photographers and people

PART 1 Are you doing right now what you most want to do?

I got my first camera when I was 10, as a Christmas gift from my father. It was a Nikkormat FT 35mm film camera. Fully manual, it had no auto-this or auto-that. It didn't even have an on/off switch. For the next three years, using that camera I learned about the technical side of photography up to the point when, around age 13, other more dazzling sides of life distracted me, and photography was lost in a haze of teenage angst.

It stayed that way for a decade or so. Then, one day, I decided to buy a new camera. I can't tell you why I had that impulse, but I listened to my inner voice and headed for the nearest camera store. There, on a shelf, I saw a shiny new Nikon SLR. It was a F90X. I bought it for the princely sum of £900 (body only) and set about learning a new set of camera skills.

In the years in between, I developed a fascination with wildlife. In particular, I was enthralled by seemingly trivial questions about nature: 'Why are zebras black-and-white striped when they live in a yellow savannah?' and similar quite interesting ponderings. I started to use the camera to record animal behaviour so that I could learn about it and that, for me, was where wildlife and photography converged.

In the early days it was just a hobby. I squeezed time with my camera between my working and family lives. I did it when I could, on occasional free weekends and sometimes after work. But as I became more involved and started to recognise the power of the image to disseminate knowledge and understanding, photography began to play a greater role in my life.





I don't like Mondays

At the time, I was working in IT sales, selling corporate data networks. It was a job I loathed and an industry I detested. One Monday morning I woke with the realisation that I really didn't want to go into work – a thought I'm sure many are familiar with, but one that literally made me feel nauseous.

As I lay there contemplating whether to get out of bed or just stay tucked up, a saying from one of my favourite books, *Illusions* by Richard Bach, floated in front of me: 'Every now and then you should ask yourself the question, "Am I doing right now what it is I most want to do in the world?" If the answer is no, you should stop doing what you're doing and go do something else.'

As those words played ping-pong with the neurons in my mind, I got up and had a shower. I then put on my suit and tie, I went into the office... and I resigned. I came home and told my wife I had a new job. She was mightily impressed when I told her I was now the managing director of a company. She was slightly less impressed when I went on to tell her that this new job had no salary attached to it and that, while I would be spending my time travelling to exotic locations with my camera, we probably weren't going to be having a family holiday anytime soon!

Dress for the job you want

I would like to say that wildlife photography had been a lifelong passion and that this new career was a lifetime ambition fulfilled, but neither statement would be completely true. What I had always wanted to achieve was to make a difference, and in wildlife photography I recognised that I had found a medium through which I could realise what Abraham Maslow – the lauded 20th-century American psychologist – described in his famous hierarchy of needs as self-actualisation or, put another way, fulfillment through personal growth and peak experiences.

The peak experiences came first and in abundance. I have always loved travel and often dreamed of working abroad.

I was living the fantasy. Photographing wetlands in Florida was quickly followed by assignments in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Sri Lanka. I was fortunate to earn a book contract early on, and soon the media and photo agencies began noticing my work.

I am often asked how I made it happen – did I go to university? Did I work as an assistant? Did I supplement my earnings with another job? The truth is, none of the above. I just told myself I was a wildlife photographer and I started to do the things I thought a wildlife photographer would do. Presented with the option of sitting in front of the television or studying to learn about animal behaviour and habitat, I chose the latter. Instead of buying the latest, greatest camera, I made do with what I had and invested my money in creating photographs – my product. I reached out to strangers who I felt could help me – researchers, biologists and conservation groups – and offered free use of my images in return for their help.

Overcoming fear

There was no plan, as such. I had a wealth of business experience and a lot of confidence from having worked successfully in sales for over a decade. In place of forecasts and flow charts, I simply applied this acumen in my new role, the difference being that I was now applying it with passion and with energy fuelled by the desire to succeed. No longer arguing for my limitations, I was seeing infinite potential and grabbing it firmly with both hands.

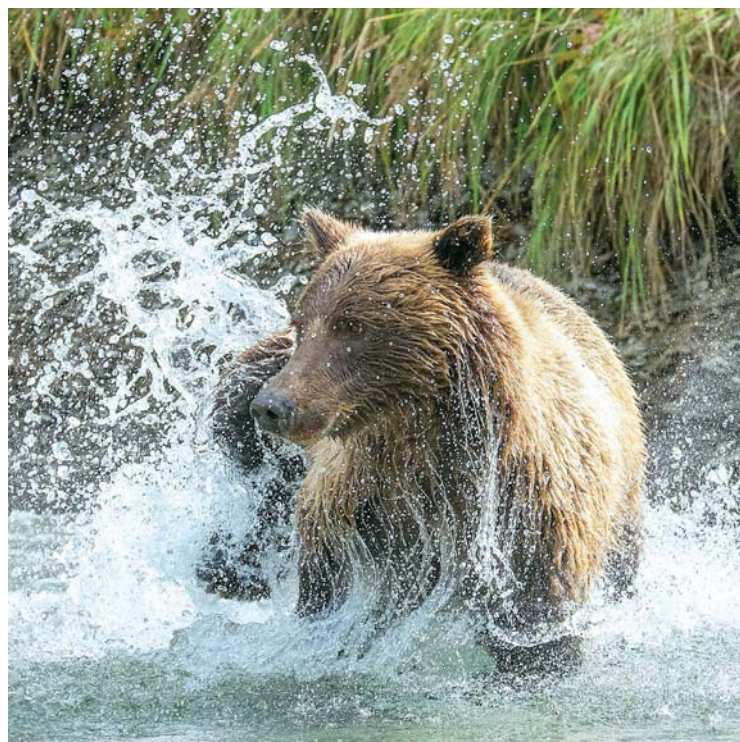
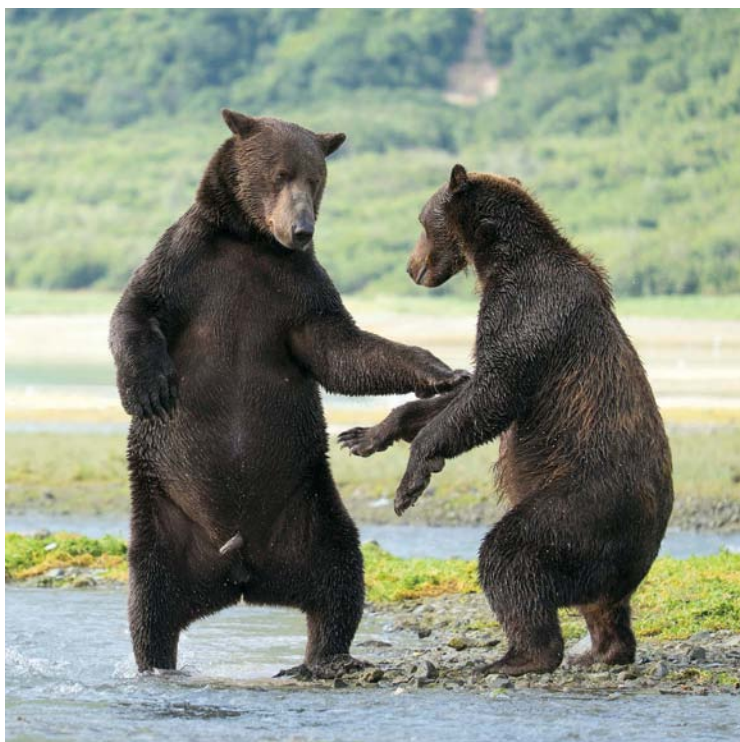
Of course, that didn't mean I wasn't conscious of how my decision might affect my family and our future wellbeing. Giving up a well-paid job and the security of employment is inherently risky, especially when you still have a mortgage to pay, a car to run and bills that need settling. How do you stop fear paralysing you from making that decision? How can the scarier side of life not frighten you?

If you allow fear to dominate you, it will stop you from taking that leap of faith or doing something you've always wanted to

top left Technology enabled me to create images that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve.

top right Much of wildlife photography is about anticipating the moment. Like avoiding life's pitfalls, knowing that the moment might happen, and what to do when it does, makes the job that much easier.

opposite page Contrary to the popular belief that photographs are taken, I believe they are made – designed and constructed by the person behind the camera.



left As a photographer I am a storyteller. A large part of my work is noticing the many stories that nature has to tell.

right In the beginning, I used photography to help me learn about and understand animal behaviour.

do in life. So how do you make the jump? You look at the situation and analyse it in elaborate detail. It's what Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield describes as 'sweating the small stuff'.

In my case, it wasn't the potential drop in income or the loss of a monthly pay cheque that was scary; it was the possibility of losing our home or starving. So I thought, how might that happen? What are all the possible things that could cause us to starve or become homeless? And then I figured out how to overcome any such events so that I could pre-empt them.

A new paradigm

As well as my own potential, I also noticed the possibilities in the industry. Although I wasn't an early adopter, the digital photography revolution was upon us and, while I had little time for the IT industry as a whole, I was immersed enough to know that technology would change the shape of the wildlife photography market in ways that seemingly, to many at the time, verged on science fiction (think personal TV channels, social media and self-publishing) or, worse, was close to heresy (such as the convergence of still and video imagery).

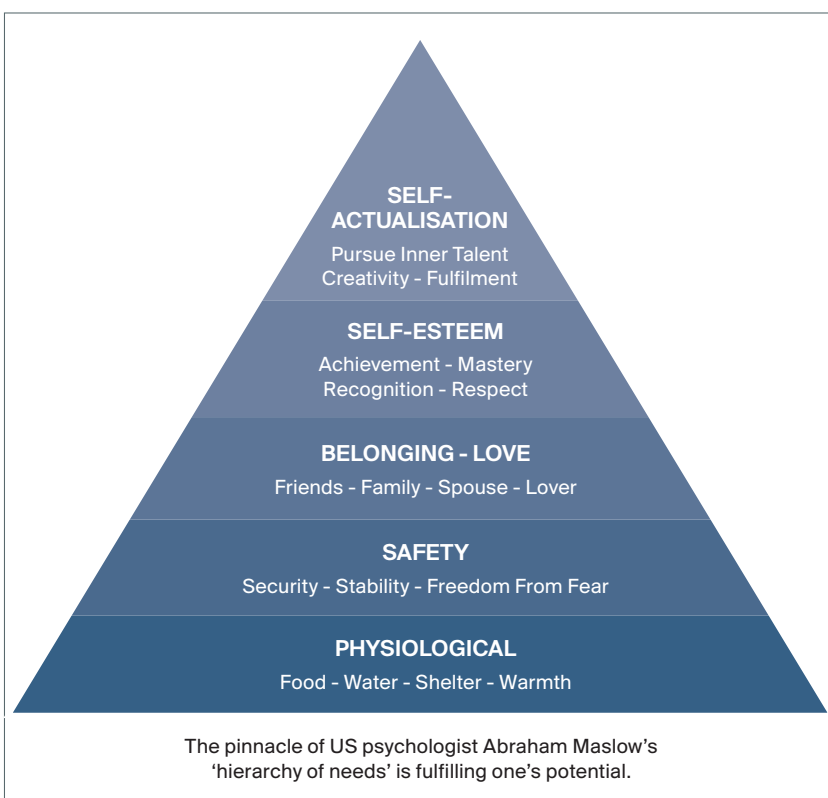
This insider knowledge, which gave me the benefit of forethought, meant that I was constantly motivated to develop new techniques and approaches to my work, as well as providing innovative ways to reach a global audience. In terms of making a difference, there was a new paradigm. No longer did the power rest with a few large and often exclusive media outlets that were typically closed to rookie photographers like me. In the new media world, I had the means to engage directly with the public – my audience.

Of course, having the means to communicate doesn't detract from the explicit need to have something interesting to say, or lessen the skills required to reach out effectively. As well as absorbing modern technology and learning how to make the most of new markets, I felt I needed a distinct visual 'voice'. So, I developed an approach to photography that worked for me – something I call back-to-front composition.

Start at the beginning

The idea is to write the caption before taking the photograph – that's the back-to-front bit. Think about it logically, though, and really it isn't such a bizarre theory. Imagine, for example, trying to build a house with no architectural drawings. Where would you start? How would you even know what materials and tools you needed?

Common sense would suggest that no one would approach house building this way. And yet the idea that fully formed,



well-composed photographs just happen, seems to be accepted as the exception to the rule. I reason that the opposite is true. In the same way buildings are constructed, I believe photographs are designed, using a visualised image that helps us make decisions about what equipment to use, which camera settings to apply, where to position the camera, and how to frame the image space and order the objects in the scene. And the first step in this process is the story you want to tell – the image caption.

This approach is based on the premise that the stories my photographs reveal are my stories and that I use my camera as an extension of my thoughts and impressions – a means to express my imagination. As the philosophical Canadian photographer Freeman Patterson once said, ‘The camera points both ways. In expressing your subject, you also express yourself.’ He went on to say, ‘As photographers, we have to accept and deal with this fact – that our images are as much a documentation and interpretation of ourselves as of the subjects we choose to photograph.’

I have applied this approach to image making ever since I worked on an assignment photographing the wildebeest migration in Tanzania, over a decade ago. I practise it still;

I teach it, I lecture on it, I write about it. For me, it’s a way of giving form and purpose to a photograph in the same way an article in a magazine or a book has structure and intent. In short, to me it is a way – my way – of photographic life.

And then life changed. In the winter of 2014 I was photographing in Yellowstone National Park when something happened that took my tried-and-trusted formula, twisted it inside out and shook it to its core. In the months that followed, in trying to make sense of the strange thing I’d witnessed, I chanced upon a completely new way of thinking about wildlife, the environment, photography and the photographer. As radical and forbidding as it is fundamental and exciting, this new wisdom nonetheless had me perplexed because, despite all the knowledge and experience I have gained in my 15-year career, I really wasn’t sure what to do when I found out that everything I once thought true may turn out to be wrong.

In next month’s chapter of A photographer’s guide to life on Earth: I am not a photographer seeking images – where does the energy behind the stories we tell come from?

below In Yellowstone National Park I had an experience that would open my mind to a new way of thinking about wildlife and my part in the world.



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR OF THIS NEW SERIES

A photographer’s guide to life on Earth is an adventure. I will not always be able to tell you what comes next, for I am living this journey in real time. In that sense, it will be a shared experience – as I discover, so may you discover with me. I can tell you that I will draw on the knowledge of celebrated physicists, astronauts, historians, artists and leading thinkers – not men and women of the past but people of today.

Nor do I know where it will lead because I am participating in this experience without being attached to a specific outcome. By the end of the series, you might think it all nonsense; you might think some of it strange. You might even think me irrational. There is nothing I can say with certainty, except this: whatever you think, I will guarantee that you’ll think. ‘Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge,’ said the eminent British philosopher John Locke, before continuing, ‘It is thinking that makes what we read ours.’



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NATURE ZONE

DISCOVER

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with nature**

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On the wing**



CLIFF-TOP VIEWS

Laurie Campbell has tips on photographing seabird colonies



Life in the Wild

*Accessible at all times and complete with spectacular scenery, St Abb's Head is a superb place to photograph nesting seabirds, says **Laurie Campbell**, who visited the reserve last spring*

The viewpoint over this 120m-drop is always difficult to resist shooting. Due to the proximity of the nesting kittiwakes and the risk of disturbance, I allow myself a maximum of 30 seconds, and limit myself to just one or two sessions each season.
Nikon D3X with Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8 lens at 15mm, ISO 125, 1/100sec at f/13, handheld

When we think of seabird colonies on the north-east coast of the UK, the Farne Islands and the Bass Rock are perhaps most likely to spring to mind. I live about halfway between the two, and although each is only a 30-minute drive away, it doesn't necessarily mean that I get to visit them all that often. Most years I manage one or two trips, and some years none at all, but last summer I set myself an all-time record and clocked up six visits to the Farnes.

During one of those visits I was leading a workshop for a group from Switzerland, and few of the guests had ever visited a seabird colony. I love such occasions because, for the uninitiated, the experience must rank as one of the most memorable wildlife spectacles the British Isles has to offer, and it's always a treat to see how people react. They



It was actually quite windy on the day I photographed this kittiwake from above. This worked in my favour, however, because the bird was partially 'hanging' in the updraft at the top of the tall cliffs, making it a little easier for me to pan the camera and focus.
Nikon D3S with Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens, ISO 800, 1/1600sec at f/6.3, handheld



Normally I would have supported my 500mm lens on a tripod or beanbag for this type of photograph, in order to obtain the precise framing I wanted, but it was impossible to position either because of an overhang on the cliff so I was forced to handhold the camera. Without an image-stabilised lens, I doubt that I would have tried to photograph this razorbill with the out-of-focus lichens in the foreground.

Nikon D3 with Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens, ISO 640, 1/320sec at f/4, handheld

were duly impressed, but I couldn't help noticing how surprised they were at the sheer number of other visitors.

The following day we headed to North Berwick, where I had booked a boat charter to the Bass Rock. Sadly, we were defeated by sea conditions, which would have made landing impossible. Instead we activated plan B, which was to spend the day at the less well known and less visited St Abb's Head on the Berwickshire coast. I visit this location more often than the Bass Rock and the Farne Islands combined, not because it's closer to home but because it is accessible at all times of day and I can pick the conditions I want.

Rising to 150 metres, the nature reserve contains some of the tallest sea cliffs on the east coast of Britain. While this may not be a place for the faint-hearted, and the birds are nowhere near as accessible as those on the Farnes or the Bass, it does offer the opportunity to photograph them within a spectacular setting. My new Swiss friends were initially disappointed at being unable to land on the Bass Rock, but I could see them warming to St Abb's as I guided them round the headlands.

Around mid-afternoon we headed inland because I wanted to introduce everyone to another side of the reserve, and one that didn't involve taking photos of seabirds. With the smell of guano and cries of auks and kittiwakes quickly gone,

we passed through a succession of very different environments – from rock-strewn slopes dotted with wildflowers and coconut-scented flowering gorse scrub to grasslands studded with meadow ant hills. Our walk culminated with a circuit round a freshwater loch, accompanied by the sounds of coots and reeling sedge warblers. I knew we needed to spend another day there.

It may seem unfair to compare the Bass and the Farnes with St Abb's Head. I can't help thinking, though, that the hurly burley of a boat trip to a seabird colony with limited time among crowds of people goes against much of what nature photography should be about: unhurried, time in the field with your subject. It's also nice to do something less predictable once in a while.

LAURIE'S FACTFILE

visiting st Abb's Head

» St Abb's Head reserve is owned by the National Trust for Scotland, which has created a visitor centre – it is signposted between the villages of Coldingham and St Abb's. The centre is housed in a row of tastefully converted farm buildings, known as the Steadings, which also houses a café, craft shops, an art gallery and toilet facilities. Complete with car park, this forms the main access point to the reserve. As a matter of policy, there is little signage round the reserve, but the best route follows the cliff-top trail in a clockwise direction, with the highest point being at the lighthouse. From there, head downhill to the Mire Loch and return to the Steadings via the road.

» The best time to visit St Abb's for seabirds is from late April until early July. Be warned, though, there's only a handful of pairs of puffins! The main

species to photograph are fulmar, shag, kittiwake, razorbill and guillemot, and because of the height of the cliffs this is an especially good site to practise photographing birds in flight in breezy conditions. From June to September, cetaceans such as minke whales and bottle-nosed dolphins are sighted offshore; a five-mile stretch of the surrounding sea was designated the UK's first voluntary marine reserve in 1984.

» Seabirds aside, St Abb's Head is regarded as a nationally important geological site and contains two distinct types of rock that show evidence of an ancient earth movement, known as the St Abb's Head Fault. This mixture of rock types helps explain the botanical richness of the reserve with the associated benefits to all other life, from invertebrates upwards.

What to shoot this month...

Laurie's April highlights

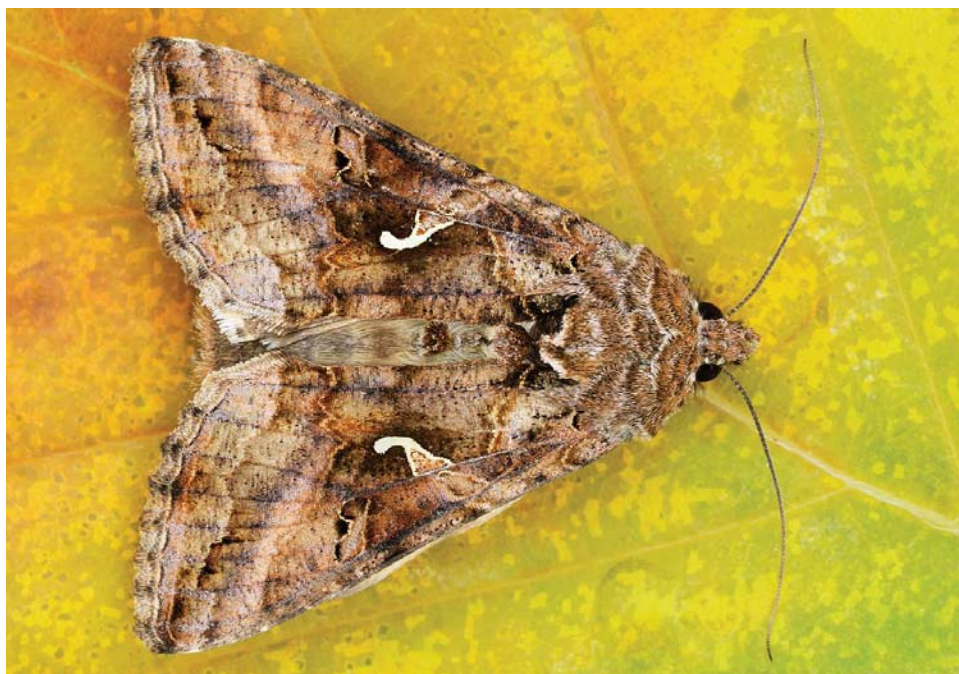


▲ After a long winter, the first days of warm spring sunshine should encourage **Scottish wood ants** (*Formica aquilonia*) to become active and start swarming on top of their impressive nest mounds in native pinewoods. At up to two metres in diameter, these mounds are easily spotted and usually found on south and west-facing slopes, with the tops slightly angled for maximum solar benefit. Photographing a swarming mass of ants is tricky. Try temporarily placing a single flake of Scots pine bark on top of the nest to encourage them to investigate. *Nikon D300 with Nikon 70-180mm macro lens at 116mm, ISO 200, 1/250sec at f/20, Nikon macro flash, handheld*

▲ For many, the return of swallows and cuckoos heralds the arrival of spring in the UK, but I think we should add the **common sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*), which can be seen on fast-flowing rivers and bodies of freshwater in northern Britain and Wales. This is a small, brown wader with white undersides, but it's the piercing three-note call that often betrays its presence. *Nikon F5 with Nikon 500mm f/4 AFS lens, Fuji Provia ISO 100, 1/250sec at f/5.6, beanbag, hide*



▲ With spring well underway, **greater stitchwort** (*Stellaria holostea*) is one of those delicate white flowers that appears in a variety of places – from woodland edges to road verges and grasslands. It usually grows in patches where all of the plants are a uniform height, providing a nice flat plane when shot from above. Alternatively, try shooting it from a much lower viewpoint. *Nikon D3X with Voigtlander APO-Lanthar f/2.5 macro lens, ISO 200, 1/250sec at f/2.8, handheld*



▲ As its name suggests, the **silver Y moth** (*Autographa gamma*) has distinctive, metallic, Y-shaped markings on the middle of the top surface of its forewings. Very few, except those in the far south, are able to survive our winters – the majority of the moths we see in Britain are immigrants that arrive in spring. This is a fairly common species, which flies both by day and night and occurs in a wide variety of habitats. Cooler conditions are best for photographing moths because they are more reluctant to move. *Nikon D300 with Nikon 200mm f/4 macro lens, ISO 200, 0.3sec at f/22, cable release, mirror-lock, tripod*

MORE SEASONAL SUBJECTS...

Flora

Spring squill (*Scilla verna*) – resembles a short bluebell with star-shaped flowers. It is only found growing on coastal maritime heaths and can withstand being drenched in salt spray.

Crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*) – traditionally blossoms in late April, but this may be another species we will see flowering ever earlier due to our warming climate.

Field pansy (*Viola arvensis*) – seen by many as a weed, this plant is highly variable in size, leaf formation and colour, but its flowers are always exquisitely marked.

Fauna

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – those living in urban environments often end up nesting in some very odd places. The scope for interesting pictures really starts when eggs hatch and the mothers have to guide their young to safety.

Adder (*Vipera berus*) – having emerged from their hibernation sites in March, males set about looking for mates. Once found, a curious mating display ensues, ending with the two intertwined.

Buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) – emerging from hibernation as early as January or February, this is one species of bumblebee that will be joined by a number of others by now.

WORLD WILDLIFE SPECTACLES

Birds, Extramadura, Spain

Comprising rolling hills, vast, semi-arid stony plains and open oak cork woodland (known as



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dehesa), Extramadura in western Spain is one of the wildest and most bird-rich places in Europe. It is renowned for its raptors, which include black, griffon and Egyptian vultures, Spanish and Bonelli's eagles, and black-shouldered kite. Great and little bustards are another highlight; they begin courtship between late March and April and are relatively easy to spot on the open plains. With sufficient rain, the landscape is a sea of flowers in spring.

Northern bluefin tuna, Gulf of Mexico

Northern bluefins of the northern and central Atlantic are the biggest and most formidable tuna. Torpedo-shaped and streamlined, they can grow up to three metres in length and can reach speeds of 45mph. Between April and June each year, large numbers of sexually mature tuna

(aged at least eight years) return to natal areas in the Gulf of Mexico to spawn, travelling up to 6,500 miles from northern feeding areas.



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10 TOP SPOTS FOR WOODLAND FLOWERS

As the days get longer and warmer, our woods and forests come to life with colourful spring flowers – from drifts of wood violets and primroses to swathes of bluebells – all making the most of the sun's energy before the tree canopy closes over with newly opened leaves. Here are some of the UK's best places to enjoy some stunning floral displays...

1 Pwll-y-Wrach nature reserve, Powys

Featuring a spectacular six-metre waterfall, Pwll-y-Wrach is a peaceful wooded valley near Talgarth. In early spring, wood anemones merge with yellow lesser celandines; in late spring, bluebells and wild garlic flowers emerge. brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk/pwll-y-wrach.html

2 Ariundle Oakwoods, Highland

A remnant of ancient coastal oakwood near Strontian on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, Ariundle is a magical place at this time of year. Trees are draped in lichen, and early spring flowers include lesser celandine, wood sorrel, wood anemone and primrose. nnr-scotland.org.uk/ariundle-oakwood

3 Dunccliffe Wood, Dorset

Located a few miles west of Shaftesbury, this beautiful 30-acre ancient forest is renowned for its bluebells, which emerge from late April. Other spring flowers include early purple orchid, moschatel, wood speedwell and yellow archangel. woodlandtrust.org.uk

4 George's Hayes, Staffordshire

Comprising two separate ancient woods, George's Hayes near Lichfield has a wonderful display of flowers including, in early spring, Staffordshire's largest colony of native wild daffodils. staffs-wildlife.org.uk/reserves/georges-hayes

5 Eridge Rocks, East Sussex

These dramatic sandstone boulders, near Tunbridge Wells, support a community of rare plantlife. In spring, look for flowers such as primrose, green-winged orchid and cuckoo pink in the surrounding woodland. wildlifetrusts.org/reserves/eridge-rocks

6 Killaloo Wood, County Derry

Oak trees dominate in this valley woodland, just outside Derry. Bluebells, wood anemone, wood sorrel and wild garlic add a welcome splash of colour in spring. woodlandtrust.org.uk

7 Hillhouse Wood, Essex

Comprising a variety of different woodland types, Hillhouse Wood in West

Bergholt is carpeted with bluebells and wood anemones in spring. woodlandtrust.org.uk

8 Priestley Wood, Suffolk

Bluebell, primrose, broad-leaved helleborine, herb Paris, twayblade orchid and common spotted orchid are among the 130 recorded flowering plants found here. woodlandtrust.org.uk

9 Carstramon Wood, Dumfries and Galloway

As well as spectacular displays of bluebells, this large, semi-natural broadleaved woodland has beautiful spring flowers such as wood sorrel, honeysuckle, primrose and wood violet. scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserve/carstramon-wood

10 Lumb Brook Valley, Cheshire

These four interconnected but distinctive woodland sites, in Warrington are filled with colourful flowers at this time of year. Species include bluebell, wood anemone, lords-and-ladies, dog rose and lesser celandine. woodlandtrust.org.uk

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First emergence

While working as a research assistant at the Kalahari Meerkat Project in South Africa last year, Robin Hoskyns was lucky to witness an important moment in the life of a family of meerkats

I hear some faint squeaks from the burrow, and as I peer into the dark hole I can just make out a couple of tiny faces. My heart beats a little faster as I realise these are the new pups that have been underground since their birth two weeks ago. Most of the group are up, but there are a couple of late risers – unusual for this family, which is normally the first to appear.

I keep still and watch the pups slowly emerge. One, two, three and finally a fourth. Unstable on their feet, eyes barely open, they paw the sand around the burrow mouth. The last couple of adults appear. Although they stay close to the burrow, they don't seem too worried as I slowly extend my hand towards them, letting them get used to my scent.

Habituation starts early in a meerkat's life at the project, and several generations have emerged from the burrow for the first time to find a human sitting with a notebook. It's hard to imagine what the meerkats make of the people that have followed their entire lives, but I like to think they see the researchers as part of the habitat, like a kind of moving tree; at least that's how it feels when one scrambles up your back to use your head as a vantage point.

The other members of the group are becoming impatient now, as the sun is getting hot. They start to move further away, leaving the babysitters to watch over the pups. I stay at the burrow to allow the pups get used to my presence. They begin to slowly explore their

surroundings, staying close to one another. After about 20 minutes the babysitters have had enough and retreat back into the burrow, taking the pups with them and leaving me to track down the rest of the group.

It was a privilege to spend time working so closely with these wild animals and to be able to capture such intimate moments with my camera. I have some lasting memories from the Kalahari; the intense ferocity of the midday sun, freezing winter nights, incredible lightning displays and the sound of the barking geckos in the evening. Witnessing a litter of meerkat pups take their first steps in the outside world, however, has to go down as being at the top of the list.



On the wing

Hoping to boost his collection of kingfisher images, Steve Young heads to a specialist wildlife hide that offers the chance to photograph these colourful birds close up

above Kingfisher landing on reedmace: It was a matter of waiting for the bird to dive and then hoping it would fly along the path the lens was pre-focused on; my finger was poised on the shutter, with the frame rate set to 9fps. I just hoped that one or two images would capture a nice pose.

right Kingfisher with fish: It's a classic shot, but it's always nice to have one such image in your own collection.

Over the years I've managed to take a few kingfisher photos, but most have been grab shots taken at various sites. The majority have been taken from a hide while waiting to photograph something else, and a kingfisher has just happened to land on a post.

One September a few years ago there was a young kingfisher present at my local patch, so I erected a hide and managed some nice shots. Each time, however, the bird had come to rest on a metal wire that it had taken a liking to, and no other perch could tempt it away.

A recent development has enabled some great opportunities for fantastic wildlife photos; there are now specialised hides for hire, where you can spend a day with a particular species, including



kingfisher. There are a number on offer round the country, where bird photographers have developed their own site, and then let others use the hides for a price. I've named them 'pay and display' hides; the photographer pays and the birds display. I decided to head to one such hide in search of some better kingfisher images.

Now, these hides are not cheap and I did wonder at the £150 fee at first, but I decided to give it a go so that I could at least form my own opinion. I went with two other photographer friends and, because the cost was per person not per hide, we ended up paying a total of £450 plus our travel costs – for that sort of price you do expect the birds to perform.

Obviously bird photography can be very hit and miss, and no one can guarantee that any bird will appear on cue, no matter how much has been paid. There were to be no misses today, though, as a kingfisher landed on our perch within 20 minutes. At this particular hide, small fish are used as bait and



placed in a large, submerged tank and a setup above it enables photographers to change the perch during the day to facilitate a variety of different photos. The more you leave the hide, the greater the disturbance to the bird, but this kingfisher was remarkably tolerant and always returned to catch more fish.

The day passed quickly, with hundreds

of images being taken by the three of us, and the hide was roomy and comfortable enough. We only had visits from the one kingfisher, but they were good enough to satisfy everyone. At some angles there were problems with the background, which is a painted board; although it is thrown out of focus when using a 500mm lens, it tended to look a little false.

above Kingfisher scenic: Occasionally the kingfisher landed further away, on a branch in the river, making for a slightly different looking image.

Steve's April highlights

BIRD OF THE MONTH

April is the time when many of our breeding birds return from their wintering sites to nest again, and house martin will be among the arrivals. The species is often confused with the swallow, but house martin lacks the long tail streamers and has a gleaming white rump.

As the name suggests, they nest on the outsides of houses – in a mud nest stuck just under the gutters. Mud is collected from any nearby pond with wet edges, and birds can be seen coming and going during the breeding season as they repair their nests when needed; even freshly fledged juveniles will help out!



top House martin in flight: A large white rump and no tail streamers are the easiest ways of telling house martin from swallow.



above left House martin collecting mud: Nests are made from mud collected from the wet edges of a nearby pond, stream or puddle.

above right House martin with swallow: Sharing the same perch as a swallow (on the right), a house martin rests on a dull, wet day.

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY TIP

Once again, I've just missed a potentially great shot – of curlews flying over stormy waves – because I was too busy looking at the back of the camera. I miss quite a few shots in this way, despite telling myself all the time not to do it. Obviously this was never a problem when I used film cameras, but since digital came along I just cannot resist chimping.

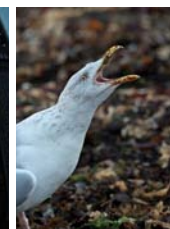
The term chimping originates from the early digital days, and I've been told it came about after crowds of press photographers were caught making lots of monkey-like 'ooh, ooh, ahhh' sounds as they reviewed their shots on their camera screens.

The golden rule is not to look at your photos until the end of a shoot, but it is so hard not to check to see if that last shot was 'the one'. At the kingfisher site in the main article, all three of us were chimping at one point; when I looked up I saw that the bird was back on the perch!

I know that no matter how hard I try to resist chimping I won't be able to, but if you can you'll have a better chance of capturing your best image.



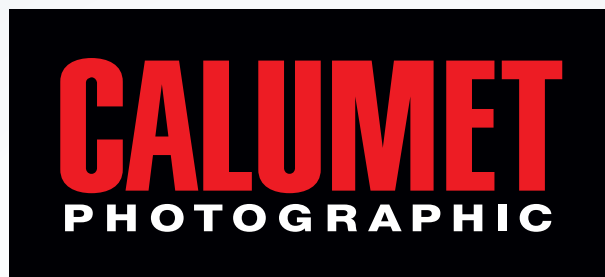
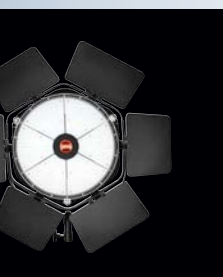
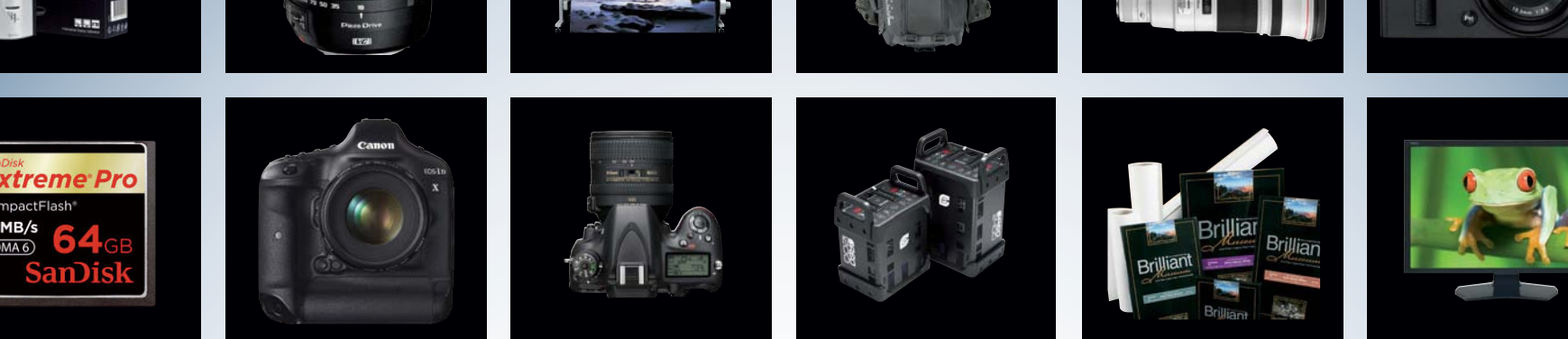
Camera screen: Being able to instantly see what I've captured is just too tempting for me; I nearly always look to see what I've got, no matter what the species.



Herring gull calling: Looking to see if the last shot was a good one is a perfect way of missing the next photo, but I couldn't resist checking the camera after I'd taken a sequence of shots of this calling herring gull.



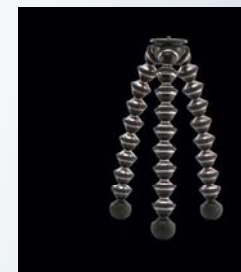
Turnstone with crab: This is one I didn't chimp on... well, not until the turnstone had run past me and I'd taken my photographs.



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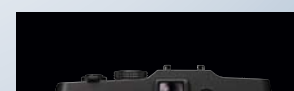
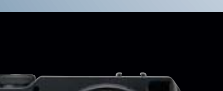
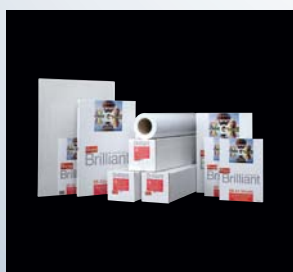


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Making the most of those missed moments

It's an old cliché, but even the best-laid plans can go monumentally wrong. The trick is to regroup, adapt and make the best of things. There's nothing like a tree falling down to make you rip up the programme, says Nick Smith

One of the best feelings in the world is, having packed the bag and chucked it into the back of the car, getting out on the open road. For the outdoor photographer there's a bit of the Toad of Toad Hall adventure spirit in all of us, and so as I sat behind the wheel chugging westwards into the afternoon sun I was of blithe spirit. One of Bertie Wooster's favourite ways to express the feeling is the line from Robert Browning's poem *Pippa Passes* where the lark is on the wing and the snail is on the thorn.

Driving across the common, all larks and snails, with the late winter wind whistling through the sorrel and the sedge, I knew it was my day. I was heading down through the Gower Peninsula towards the broad, majestic sands at Rhossili, where the plan was to catch the dying of the light over Worm's Head, shot through the ocean-stripped timbers of the good ship *Helvetia*. I know this has been done plenty of times before, and by better photographers than me. But there comes a time in your life when you simply have to do these things. It is after all Rhossili in winter, and if you don't know what that means, get Googling right now.

Halfway between Swansea and my destination there's a dark wooded valley of Pre-Raphaelite beauty through which runs the jaunty Pennard Pill, a charming little river that chuckles and burbles down from the ridge that forms Gower's spine to Three Cliffs Bay. It was on this road that I was stopped by a policeman, who had parked the jam-sandwich diagonally across the road. I rolled down the window to be told that the road was closed due to the fact that a 20-ton tree (how big is that, I wondered) had come down in last night's storm and 'nothing's getting through.' I toyed with the idea of asking him how you weigh a tree – I tend to categorise them by height or species – but, remembering that it's never a good idea to get lippy with the Fuzz, I did a respectful one-eighty and considered my next move in a small car park by the river.

I don't often use the expression 'heigh-ho', but it was one of those moments. I grabbed my camera and wandered off north up the valley thinking that, if nothing else, a good walk might be on the cards. It was all very interesting and there were some exquisite Neolithic burial chambers dotted around, standing stones and prehistoric earthworks in startling profusion. Perhaps not so startling considering that Gower forms the very

bones of ancient Wales. But the light was wrong and my fingers were cold and, because my heart wasn't really in it, I trudged back towards the car.

I don't know what, but something made me keep walking, and the further I walked south, the more the valley opened up. On the flood plain there were huge looping meanders where the river gets lost on its way to the sea. There were ox-bow lakes shimmering silver in the winter light. The ruined 13th century Pennard Castle scowled down on me from its perch in the limestone crags. Light cascaded into the valley in great horizontal waves of gold. The winter-blown ashes and oaks cowered in the stiff breezes that whipped up off the sea.

You don't get days like these for the asking, and if you don't count your blessings you're a fool. Forget the fact that this is a lucky accident I said to myself: get to work. Of course, I had the wrong lens on the camera. In my disappointment at being thwarted in my quest for Rhossili, I'd just grabbed the instrument without thinking too much and left the rest of my gear in the boot. But as I settled into that familiar feeling of letting your eyes do the work while your fingers instinctively operate the machine, I knew – I just knew – that not only had I got something special here before me, but something I'd never have planned in a million years. And that's because you can't plan for a lost moment.

The sun went down, the temperature dropped and it was time to go home, park up and go for a pint. As I sat in the local pub thinking about those past three hours, I wondered what there was to be learned from such an experience. There had to be some grain of homespun wisdom that could be gleaned from a fleeting and yet perfect moment that was more evolved than simply saying I had snatched an unexpected victory from the jaws of defeat.

But there wasn't. Sometimes life is like that. You go fishing one day and you catch a big fish. Next day, same river, no luck, no fish. I did, however, learn something about the nature of trees. I would never have in even the wildest of my dreams supposed that there might be a point to weighing one. But as I am an open-minded man, next Christmas, when I go to the market I shall go up to the purveyor of fine yuletide arboreal plant-ware and ask him for not an eight-footer, as is my custom, but something in the region of a few hundredweight.

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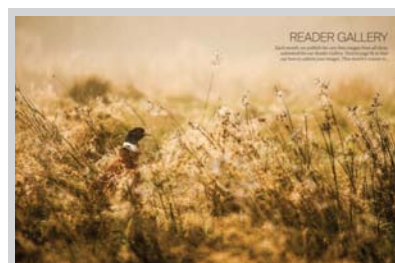
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Take on our photo challenge – send us your best natural light landscapes (see page 111), and as well as having your image featured in the August 2015 issue of *OP*, you could also win a Manfrotto 30L Off Road backpack.



LETTERS

We'd love to hear from you! Please send your views, opinions and musings to claire.blow@thegmcgroup.com, or send your comments to us by post. If your letter is published as our 'Letter of the Month' you'll win a prize; this month we gave away a House of Cards memory card wallet from MindShift Gear.

Please note: letters may be edited.



OP READER DAYS

Register your interest for our soon to be announced *OP* Reader Days, and you could be joining us and some of our professional contributors at one of a number of great UK locations. Please send your full contact details, including name, postal address, and a daytime telephone number to anna.evans@thegmcgroup.com, or use our postal submission form.



Where in the world?

If you can tell us the name of this large body of water, found in a mountainous region noted for its numerous lakes, waterfalls and coniferous forests, you could win a pair of Keen's superb new Kuta sandals, worth £65.

Where is it?

The image shows a stunning sunset reflected in a lake that has nearly 1,000 lakes and bays. But it's not Lake Michigan, Japan or Switzerland. Lake, USA or Lake Louise, Canada.

This month's prize is a pair of Keen's Kuta sandals. These sandals are made from a quick-drying, durable material and feature a comfortable, durable midsole. They are perfect for the warmer days of spring and perfect for photo shoots that take you to the water's edge.

Send your answer to anna.evans@thegmcgroup.com or drop it in the post by 15th April 2015. The prize will be awarded to the winner on 15th April 2015.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Tell us the name of the location featured on page 112 and this month you could win a pair of Keen's new Kuta sandals, worth £65. Featuring a quick-drying webbing upper and a comfortable, durable midsole, this versatile hiking and water sandal is ideal for the warmer days of spring



and perfect for photo shoots that take you to the water's edge.

HOW TO SUBMIT

DIGITAL SUBMISSIONS

When burning your CD, create two folders: one containing TIFF or JPEG – saved at quality 10 or above – files, saved at 300ppi, RGB or CMYK, and MAC compatible; and a second folder with low-res 72ppi JPEG files. Only send 8-bit files (not 16-bit files) and flatten any layers. Add your own name to the image file names. Please write your name and contact details on your CD, or include this information in a text file on the CD. Finally, if you can, print off a contact sheet of thumbnails of the images included on the CD; this is very useful for us.

PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH STICKERS TO YOUR CD

YOUR SUBMISSION – CHECKLIST

- 1 Send both low-res and high-res versions of your images
- 2 Add your own name to your image filenames
- 3 Write your name and contact details on your CD

EMAIL ENTRIES

We are unable to accept speculative submissions via email, so please do not send work in this way, unless requested to do so by a member of the *OP* editorial team.

WEBSITE SUBMISSIONS

You can send us links to your website, for us to view your general work only. Please note that strictly no correspondence will be entered into regarding website submissions. Send the link to opweb@thegmcgroup.com.

SEND POSTAL SUBMISSIONS TO:

Outdoor Photography, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN

RETURN OF YOUR WORK

Please include a SAE if you would like your submission returned.

PLEASE NOTE

Due to the many submissions we receive from our readers each month, no correspondence can be entered into. If you have not heard from us within 10 weeks (except for Viewpoints) then it is unlikely we will be using your work in the magazine on this occasion.

IMPORTANT

GMC Publications cannot accept liability for the loss or damage of any unsolicited material, including slides.

EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

If you would like an exhibition or event to be included in *Outdoor Photography*, please email Anna Bonita Evans at anna.evans@thegmcgroup.com at least 10 weeks in advance. You can also send information to the postal address (above).

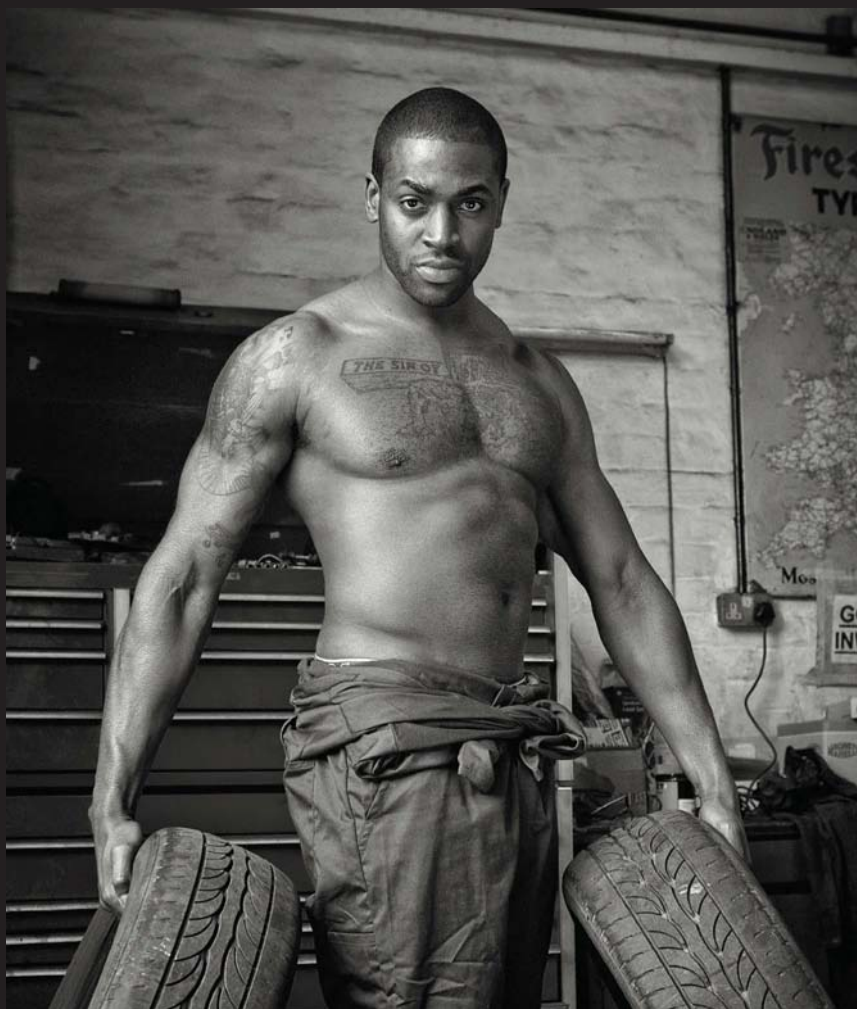
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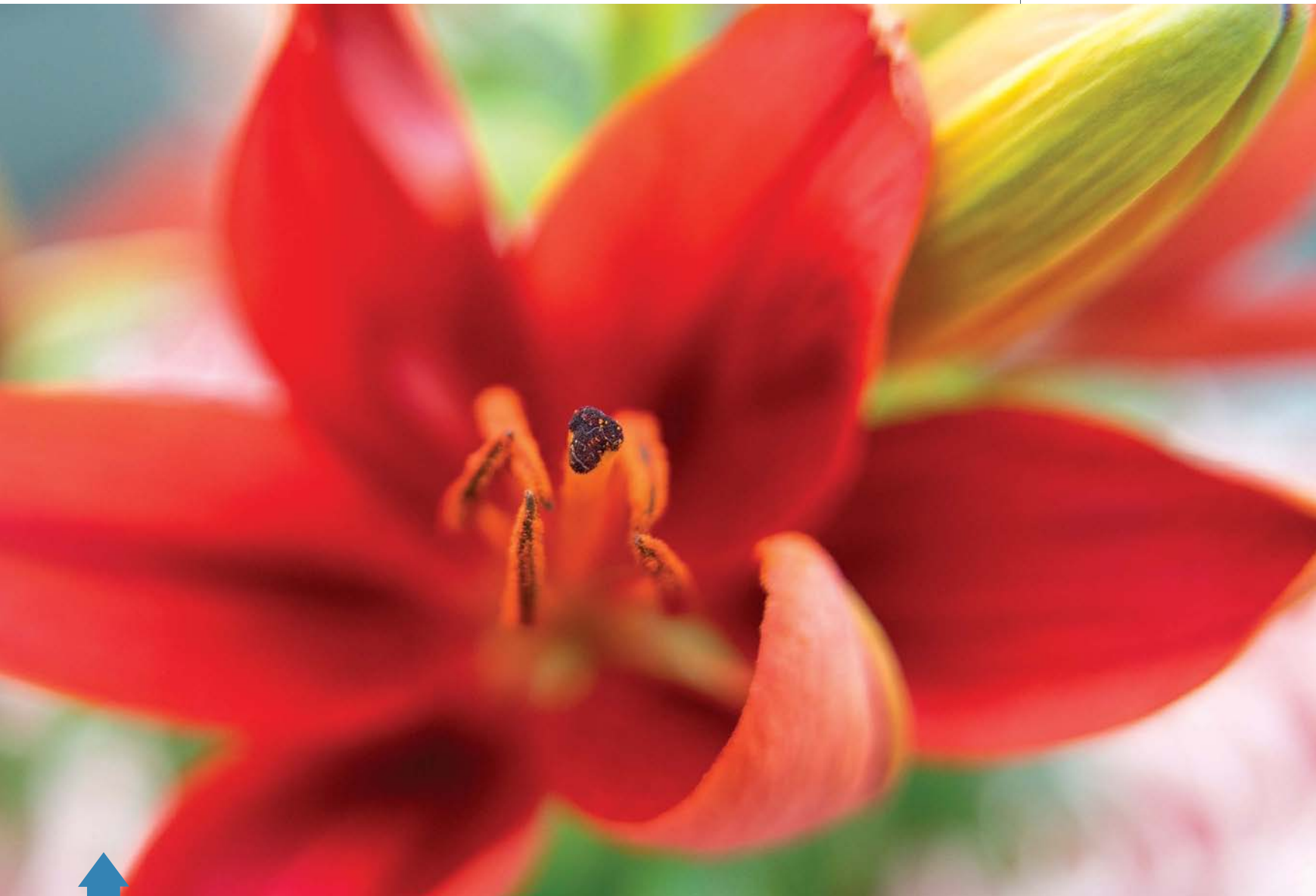
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90 **Gearing up**

92 **Camera test**



SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Andy Luck tests Panasonic's latest fixed-lens compact, the LX100

THE FUTURE OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHER

With technology getting lighter, faster and more sophisticated, what might outdoor photography kit of the future look like? Here's a round up of the latest products that sparked our interest; some are available now, while others will be released later this year, and all of them show what's possible when creative thinking and clever technology combine...



DJI Inspire 1

Want to take your photography to new heights? DJI's latest drone has strong, carbon fibre arms that lift out of the camera's vision for an unobstructed 360° view of the world below. Capable of shooting 4K video and capturing 12MP images, the Inspire 1's camera has a lens consisting of nine separate elements, including an aspherical lens for extreme clarity. The gimbal gives you smooth, stable footage in almost any flight conditions, and its powerful propulsion system and aerodynamic design help it cut through the air.

Guide price £2,380 (with single remote)
Available now store.dji.com

Samsung Portable SSD T1

Small but mighty, Samsung's new external hard drive measures just over 7x5cm, weighs only 30g and holds 1TB data. Compact enough to slide into your pocket, wallet or camera bag, this device takes portability to the next level. Thanks to the hard drive's N-VAND technology, it has a transfer speed of up to 450MB/s and can withstand up to four times more shock impact and 40 times more vibration than other external hard drives.

Guide price £500
Available now samsung.com



Garmin Fenix 3 Sapphire

A GPS sport watch designed for athletes and outdoor adventurers, Garmin's high quality Fenix 3 Sapphire lets you track your performance. It's waterproof down to 100m and has wireless connectivity, bluetooth, a heart rate monitor and weather alerts. Of particular interest to outdoor photographers is the watch's navigation functionality: its GPS track log creates a 'bread crumb trail' as you move and lets you mark up to 1,000 different locations.

Guide price £499
Available now
garmin.com



Leatherman Tread

A wearable multi-tool that's crafted from high-strength, corrosion resistant stainless steel links, Leatherman's latest product might be one of the most useful bits of kit for your outdoor excursions. It has a total of 25 tools, including screwdrivers, a box wrench, cutting hooks, allen keys, a bottle opener and a carbide glass breaker, and can be worn as a bracelet so you can access each of its features quickly. It's customisable, so users can rearrange links or add new ones if necessary.

Guide price £139.95 (silver);
£189.95 (black DLC coated)
Available from May
whitbyandco.co.uk



Canon EOS 5Ds and EOS 5Ds R

Canon's latest cameras – the 5Ds and the 5Ds R – set a new standard for 35mm DSLRs: they feature the first full-frame CMOS sensor with 50.6 million megapixels. They also have three new in-camera crop shooting modes: 1.3x, 1.6x and 1:1, and can capture stills at 19MP even when cropped to 1.6x. The cameras lack 4K capabilities, but Canon didn't compromise on other performance features. They have a 61-point AF system, DIGIC 6 processors, native ISO of 100-6400 (extendable to 50-12800), a shooting rate of five frames per second, and a Mirror Vibration Control System. The higher-end 5Ds R has a low-pass cancellation filter to maximise the sensor's resolution and image quality. *OP* columnist David Noton, who was the first landscape photographer to try out the 5Ds model, said: 'We have in the 5Ds the flexibility of a portable DSLR system that's capable of delivering the kind of razor sharp image quality previously associated only with large format photography. It's a real game changer.'

Guide price Canon EOS 5Ds: £2,999.99 (body only)

Canon EOS 5Ds R: £3,199.99 (body only)

Available from early April

canon.co.uk



SmartWool PhD Graduated Compression Ultra Light Pattern Socks

Already popular with runners, compression socks can increase circulation to reduce lactic acid build-up. To help your legs recover faster from a long mountain trek, we recommend SmartWool's latest addition to the compression garment market. With logically placed ventilation zones, ReliaWool technology for protection in high impact areas and a 4 Degree elite fit system for greater stretch, this sock will help keep you going for longer.

Guide price £37.95

Available now

smartwool.com



FOUR OTHER GREAT HI-TECH PRODUCTS!

Here's a handful of other products not yet available in the UK but worth keeping your eye on...

Patagonia Wild Sockeye Salmon

The quality of food on the move is getting better, and a great example is Patagonia's Wild Sockeye Salmon which, unopened, requires no refrigeration. Cooked and ready to eat, you'll be thankful for this tasty 6oz portion of fish when tucking into your dinner on a camping trip. The salmon is sustainably sourced, too.

Guide price \$12

Available in the US

patagoniaprovisions.com



Leki Photosystem Carbon

Good for helping to reduce the weight of your kit bag, Leki's Photosystem is made from carbon and is a monopod and trekking pole in one. It's Aergon photo adapter grip and new Speed Lock external adjustment system means attaching your camera is quick and keeps it ultra secure.

Guide price \$159.95

Available in the US

usa.leki.com



Mophie battery pack for iPhone 6

Smartphone battery packs are nothing new, but Mophie's latest charger for the iPhone 6 gives up to 120% extra juice. Its hard exterior shell and impact isolation technology will help to keep your phone protected from heavy impacts and falls.

Guide price \$199.95

Available in the US

mophie.com



Heimplanet The Cave

Heavy and cumbersome tent poles might become a thing of the past thanks to the forward thinkers at German-based company Heimplanet, who have created expedition-worthy air-pole tents. Inflated from a single point,

The Cave, a three-person tent, has a pitching time of less than a minute.

No guy lines are needed either, due to its diamond grid frame, which gives stability in winds as strong as 120km/h.

Guide price €549

Available from April

heimplanet.com



Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX100

Featuring a micro four-thirds sensor, manual controls and a fast zoom lens, Panasonic's Lumix DMC-LX100 is an ambitious compact camera. **Andy Luck** finds out if it meets expectations

Guide price £649

Contact panasonic.co.uk

below left The LX100 can focus down to 3cm at the flick of a switch, without any need for special close-up attachments. *Panasonic DMC-LX100, ISO 200, 1/400sec at f/5.6*

below right Even shooting directly into low winter sun, there are few problems with flare on this lens. *Panasonic DMC-LX100, ISO 200, 1/640sec at f/4*

The last Panasonic fixed-lens compact camera reviewed in *OP* was the LX5, in 2010 – a terrific little pocket camera that packed a lot into a tiny package. It was around 11cm wide, but it had a small 1/1.63in CCD sensor. It was, however, one of the best pocket cameras of the time, and a large part of its appeal, aside from its image quality and fast Leica zoom lens, lay in its metal build, retro looks and manual controls.

Now, five years on, Panasonic has done the seemingly impossible and squeezed a variant of their much bigger micro four-thirds sensor into a delightful metal bodied and manually controlled compact, the LX100. At 11.4cm wide, it is barely larger than the LX5 or the LX7.



To fit the image circle of the marvellous, built-in Leica DC Vario-Summilux zoom lens, Panasonic has adapted the normal output of the 16MP micro four-thirds sensor to a still-respectable 12.8MP for the LX100. Any doubts about the lower resolution are soon dispelled by the excellence of the Leica zoom lens, which has an effective focal range of 24-75mm and is fast, at f/1.7-2.8. Compared to other compacts, the speed of this lens is good – not only for low light, but also for providing improved background blur. With 11 elements in eight groups, five aspherical

lenses, eight aspherical surfaces and two dual-sided aspherical surface ED lenses, this is quite a special optic. True, one is giving up the flexibility of interchangeable lenses with the LX100, but if this lens could be purchased separately for one of the Panasonic interchangeable lens cameras, it would probably cost almost as much as the LX100, lens and all!

So, we have a great lens from Leica here, but there is much more to this little camera than that. It also has a built-in 2,764k-dot electronic viewfinder, Raw development in-camera, full HD 60p and 4K video, 4K photo mode and 11fps burst shooting. In addition, it has an extensive range of 22 creative filters (which can be used in JPEG, while Raw is still recorded), panorama, stop-motion and time-lapse modes and Wi-Fi/NFC connectivity.

The LX100 also has an electronic shutter option, enabling almost silent operation and, in that mode, an amazingly fast 1/16000sec shutter speed is possible. A very advanced depth-by-defocus autofocus system greatly improves autofocus speed and accuracy – this was first introduced on the top-end Panasonic GH4.

Then there is the beautifully made metal body with decent built-in grip and proper, knurled, click-stop dials for shutter speed and exposure compensation on the top plate. An aperture dial is around the lens barrel itself. If you like the feel of manual cameras and lenses from yesteryear then, like me, you'll probably find it blissful.





Just behind the manual focusing ring is a small switch for changing aspect ratios, from 3:2, 16:9, 1:1 to 4:3. Combine this feature with the filter button near the shutter release and you can try a huge range of formats and styles without ever having to delve into menus; a nice touch.

The 3in, 921k-dot screen departs from recent Panasonic practice in that it isn't a touchscreen. Having found this so useful while reviewing the GH4 (OP183), I did miss this feature, but many will not.

The LX100 lacks a built-in flash, too – something I found myself using a lot for social photography with the Sony RX100

III. Again, it's a feature I would prefer to have seen included on the Panasonic, rather than the clip-on external flash bundled with the camera.

Image quality, thanks to the excellent lens and the sensible use of just over 12MP with the Venus processing engine from the GH4, is very good. Dynamic range is also pretty good for a compact, although you do have to watch for highlight clipping. I didn't find quite the same bite as the smaller Sony RX100 III with its 21MP resolution. If background defocus is your thing, however, it is easier to achieve with the LX100.

above top Few other compact cameras can achieve such pleasing background blur as the LX100 with its lens set to wide open.
Panasonic DMC-LX100, ISO 200, 1/2000sec at f/1.7

above bottom There is plenty of detail from the LX100's 12MP sensor.
Panasonic DMC-LX100, ISO 200, 1/125sec at f/4

TECH SPEC

Camera type Fixed lens micro four-thirds compact camera
Sensor type Micro four-thirds, CMOS 17.3x13mm, 12.8MP
Maximum resolution 4112x3088
Lens Leica DC Vario-Summilux, 3.1x optical zoom, f/1.7-2.8
Stabilisation Power OIS
Minimum focusing distance 3cm (wideangle), 30cm (telephoto)
Shutter speed 60sec to 1/16000sec (electronic shutter)
ISO sensitivity 100 to 25600
Viewfinder Electronic 0.38in LVF 2,760,000 dot
LCD 3in, 921,000 dots
Flash Detachable hotshoe only, GN7
Video 3840 x 2160 pixels, 25p (4K: 100Mbps/MP4)
Storage SD, SDHC, SDXC
Connectivity USB 2.0, micro HDMI, Wi-Fi, NFC
Size 114.8x66.2x55mm
Weight 393g

LIKES

- ✓ Fabulous lens
- ✓ Great build
- ✓ Manual controls
- ✓ Extensive feature set

DISLIKES

- ✗ Noticeably bigger than the Sony RX100 III
- ✗ Resolution may be a little limited for some
- ✗ Lacks pop-up flash
- ✗ No touchscreen
- ✗ Lack of tilting screen

VERDICT

The LX100 is clearly brimming with features, but it is probably the design and build that will win over most hearts. The camera may be bigger than its competitors, but the manual controls, combined with sensibly placed buttons, just make so much sense. Add to that the fact that a large sensor lies behind a great lens and you have a recipe for a very pleasing, uncomplicated and relatively portable camera.

RATINGS

Handling	93%
Performance	95%
Specification	94%
Value	90%

OVERALL
93%

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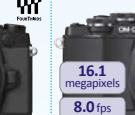
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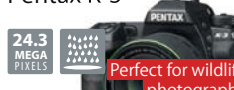
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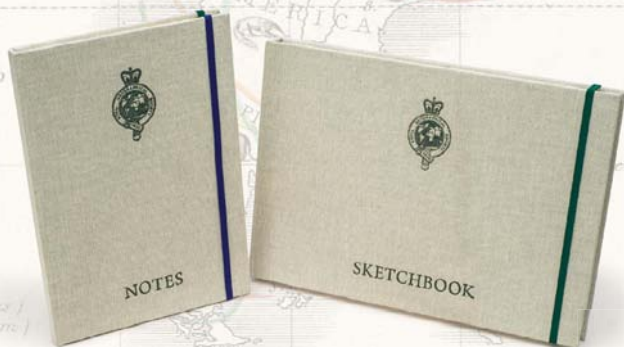
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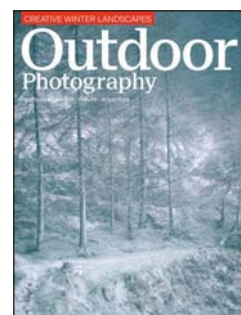
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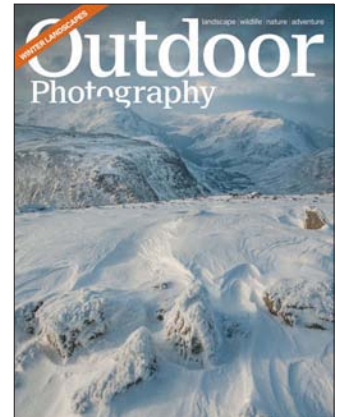
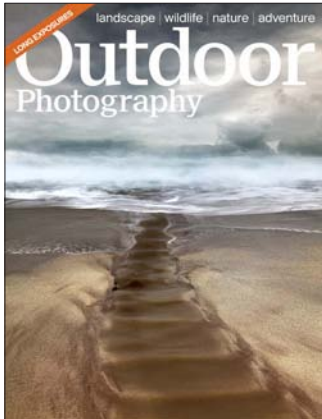
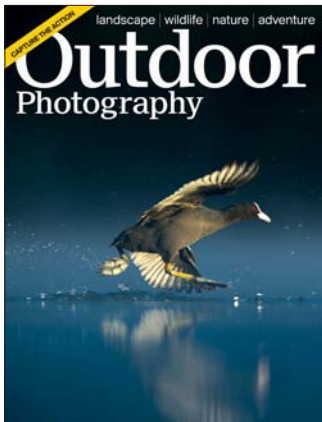
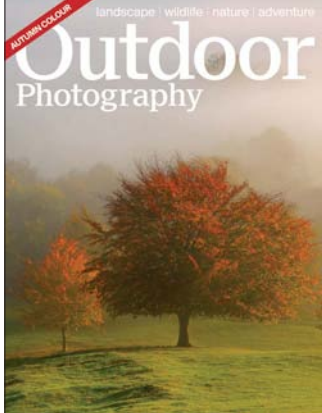
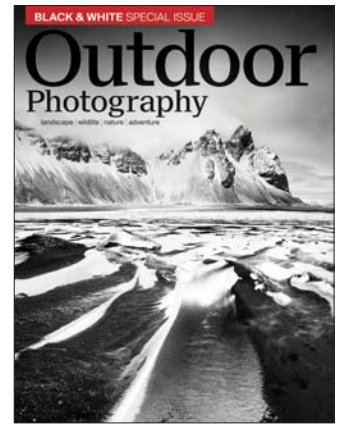
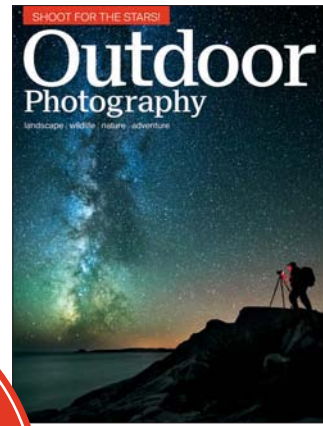
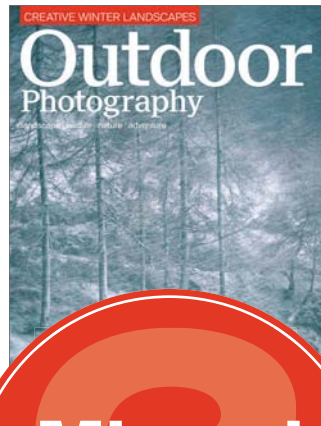
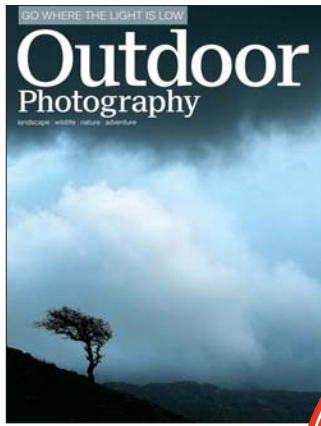
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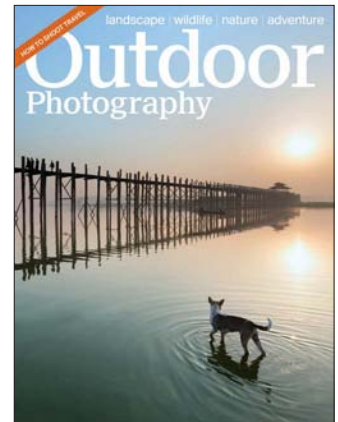
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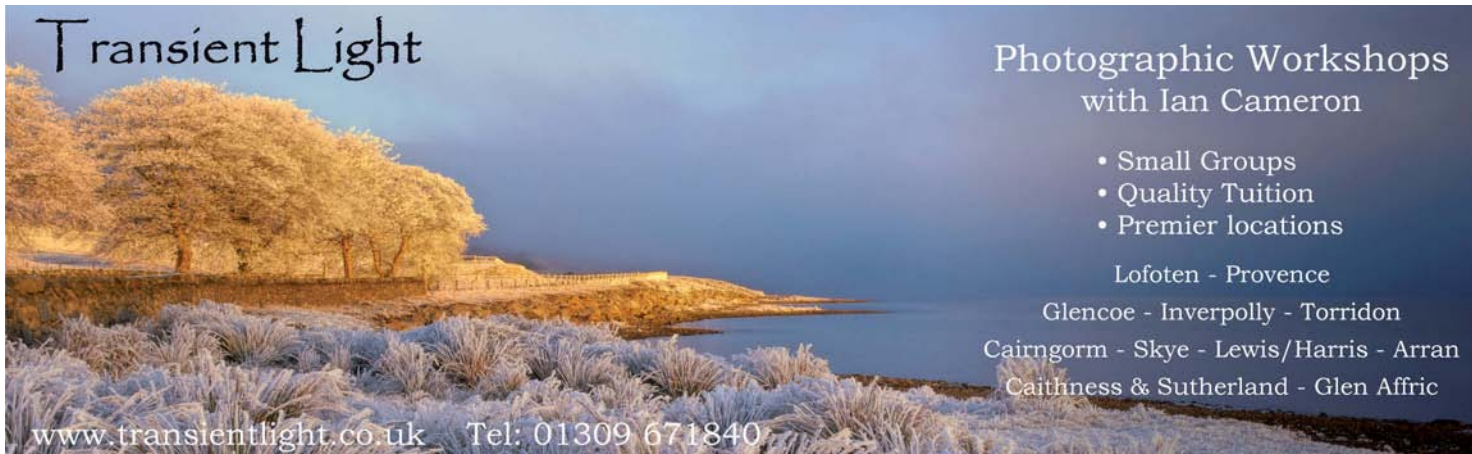
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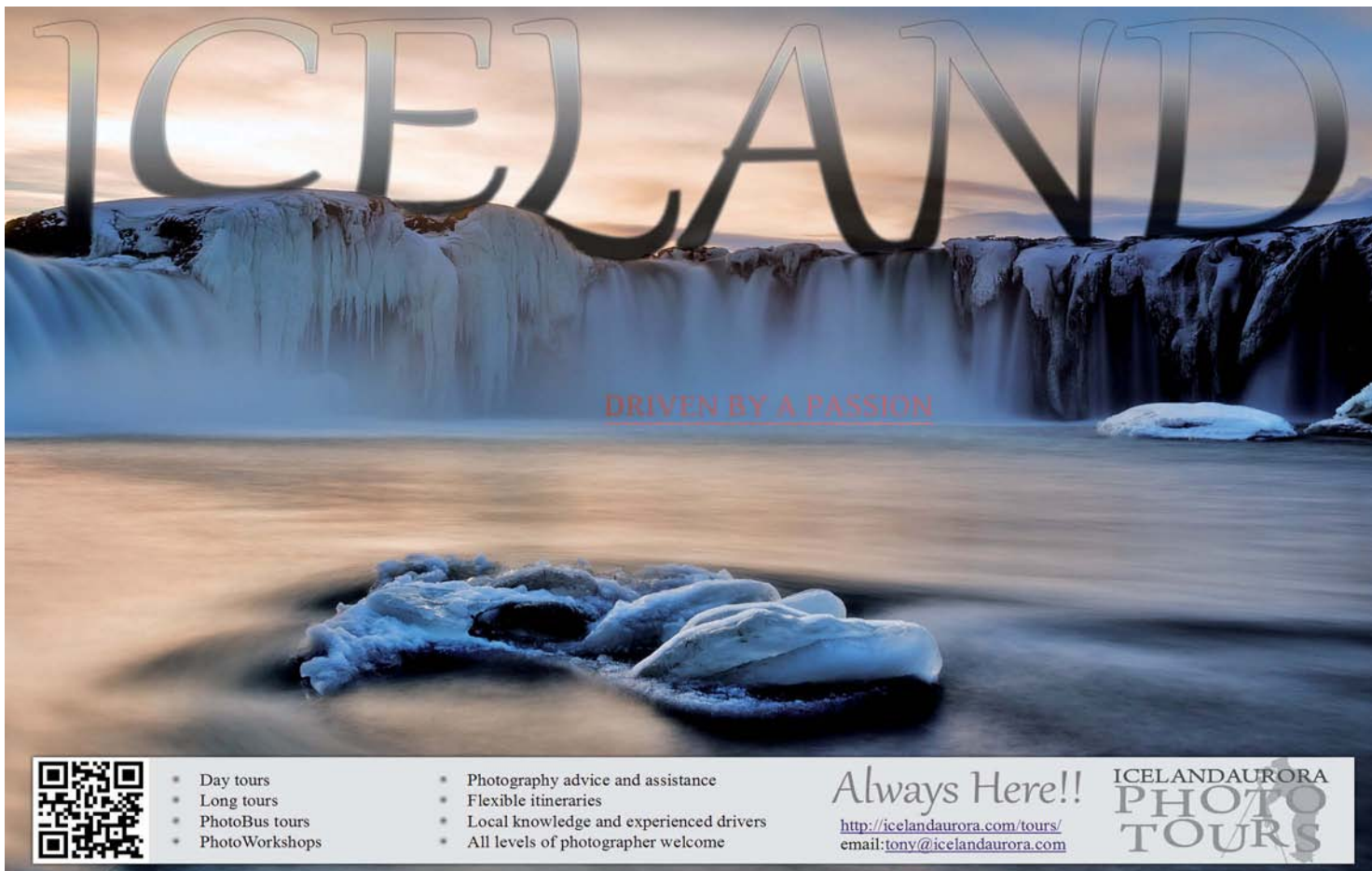
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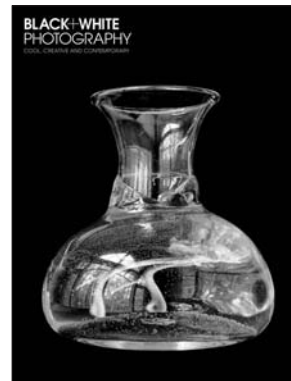
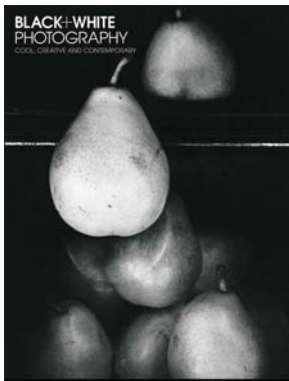
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A large tiger with orange fur and black stripes is walking towards the camera on a dirt path. The background shows green grass and trees under a clear sky.

A close-up photograph of a cheetah cub looking directly at the camera. The cub has a light brown coat with dark spots and a black stripe running through its eyes. It is standing in a grassy area.



A photograph showing two seals in shallow water. One seal is on the left, facing right with its mouth open. The other seal is on the right, facing left, with its mouth also open, appearing to interact with the first seal. The water is shallow and the background is a sandy beach.

A black and white photograph of a badger sitting in a body of water, looking towards the camera. The badger has its front paws raised near its face and its hind legs sticking out of the water. The background shows some vegetation and a shoreline.

A close-up photograph of a lioness roaring, showing its mouth wide open with sharp teeth. A lion cub is visible in the background, looking towards the camera.

A close-up photograph of a cheetah cub walking towards the camera. The cub has distinctive black spots on its golden-brown fur and is looking directly at the viewer. It is walking on a grassy field with some blurred vegetation in the background.

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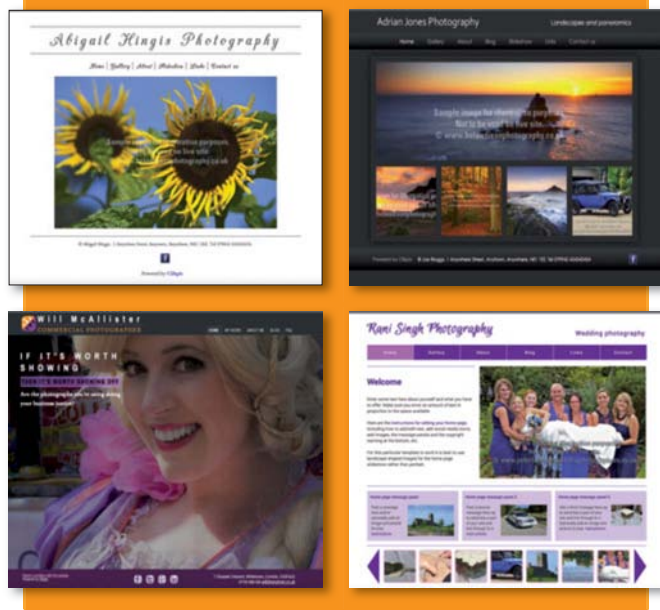
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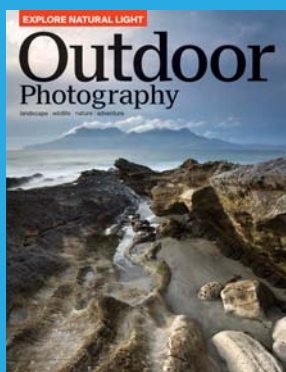
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IF YOU ONLY DO ONE THING THIS MONTH...

Astrophotography

In our December issue we challenged you to send in your best astrophotography landscapes, and we were stunned by the quality of the entries. Here's the winner of the Aquapac 40L Upano Duffel and Stormproof Pouch, and our nine runners-up



WINNER (OPPOSITE PAGE)

Janet Miles

The glacial lagoon at Jökulsárlón, in the south-east of Iceland, provides a perfect backdrop for the aurora borealis, if you are lucky enough to be there when the weather is good. It was mid-February and that evening we had driven around for a couple of hours hoping the lights were going to show. We ended up at the lagoon, where we had been the night before without success. Fortunately, we were rewarded on this occasion with a wonderful light show across the stunning starlit landscape.

Nikon D700 with Nikkor 16-35mm lens at 19mm, ISO 1600, 35sec at f/4, tripod, cable release



1/ Mark Ferguson

On a clear, moonlit night in February last year I headed out to the Ring of Brodgar, a Neolithic stone circle on the Orkney Islands. I lit the stones with a torch and shot 100 consecutive exposures that I later combined using startrails.de. I couldn't believe my luck when a faint auroral glow began to appear in the northern sky.

Canon EOS 7D with Sigma 10-20mm lens at 10mm, ISO 400, 100 exposures of 30sec at f/5, locked cable release, tripod, torch
markfergusonphotography.co.uk



2/ Andy Harbin

There is an old barn near where I live that I've photographed many times in different conditions, but never like this. I thought it might make an interesting foreground to a star trail image. The bright orange glow to the right is from the town of Cirencester. It wasn't that late in the evening so the sky still held a little colour in it.

Canon EOS 6D with Sigma 10-24mm lens at 14mm, ISO 250, 100 15sec exposures at f/4, tripod, remote shutter release, images combined in Photoshop to create the star trails
andyharbin.co.uk



3/ Maggie Manson

While on safari in Mashatu, Botswana we decided this baobab would make a suitable foreground subject for some night sky photography. As dusk approached we returned to set up our tripods, choose our composition and wait for the light to fade. The orange glow on the horizon comes from a diamond mine across the border in



South Africa. A faint satellite trail tracking across the sky is also visible.

Nikon D610 with Nikkor 16mm lens, ISO 3200, 30sec at f/2.8, tripod, 2-3sec of torch light to 'paint' the tree
nature-photographers-portfolio.co.uk

4/ Rachael Talibart

I managed to beg a couple of evenings off from our family holiday in Western Australia to shoot the amazing night sky. During the day I had spotted a small tidal river on Smith's Beach, near

Yallingup, and I knew that was my location for the evening. I thought I'd have a chance to capture the Milky Way; the Quadrantid meteor was a nice bonus!

Canon EOS 5D MkIII with Canon 16-35mm f/2.8 L lens at 16mm, ISO 1600, 30sec at f/2.8, tripod, cable release
rachaeltalibart.com

5/ Jamie Begg

I took this shot from the bottom of my garden, wanting to experiment with capturing star trails.

I had photographed star trails once before, but it hadn't turned out that well. This time, with a bit more know-how and luck, it turned out better. I shot about an hour's worth of 30sec photos, which I then stacked in Photoshop. Composing and focusing was tricky in the dark but thankfully it's near enough in focus, and I managed to get the North Star in the frame (top left). Once I had the camera set up, I just left it on its time-lapse setting and headed back inside the house to enjoy the warmth.

Nikon D5000 with 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 lens at



20mm, ISO 800, around 90 30sec photos
at f/4, tripod
500px.com/jamiebegg

6/ Dr Hinrich Baesemann

I took this image of the Milky Way in Tom Price, an Outback mining town on the edge of the Hamersley Range in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Despite it being very isolated, there was a significant amount of light pollution coming from the town.

Canon EOS 5D MkIII, lens not recorded, ISO 1250, 30sec, aperture unrecorded

7/ Stephen Lavery

This image is of the Knockagh war memorial in Greenisland village in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. I felt a different perspective from the

standard frontal shot would be ideal with the memorial set against a clear night sky. My intention was to create the sense that the memorial was in 'space flight'.

Nikon D7000 with Sigma 17-70mm lens at 19mm, ISO 4000, 27sec at f/3, Giottos tripod
stephenlavery.com

8/ Ric Harding

This shows the Milky Way over Mallaig in Scotland, and was taken on one of the very rare occasions when I have been somewhere where there is neither significant light pollution nor cloud cover. It was taken in the small village of Inverie on the Knoydart peninsula, which is one of the most inaccessible places in Britain – it can only be reached by boat or by a 16-mile walk from the nearest road. As well as the Milky Way,

it shows clouds lit by light from Mallaig, and a fishing boat on Loch Nevis.

Nikon D800 with Nikkor 16-35mm VR lens
at 16mm, ISO 1600, 30sec at f/4, tripod

9/ Tony Matthews

This photograph shows a lone oak tree with the Orion constellation and the lights of Andover over the horizon. The tree is in a field near Ladle Hill in north Hampshire, close to my home, and is one of my favourite subjects. I have photographed it in every season and in many different weather conditions. This was my first attempt to photograph it at night.

Canon EOS 40D with EF 28-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS USM lens at 28mm, ISO 400, 25sec at f/5.6, Manfrotto 055PROB tripod and cable release
flickr.com/photos/ammattews

YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE

Natural light landscapes

Most of us, of course, always take our landscape images in natural light, but there are many creative ways to utilise that light to have the maximum effect on the photograph. The key to success is choosing the right lighting conditions for the right image. Whether you opt to shoot a scene with back, front or side light can radically change the outcome, and there are infinite possibilities in terms of subtle lighting differences on overcast days. Take a read through Lee Frost's advice on the use of natural light on page 28, and then send us your very best interpretations of perfect light on the landscape. We look forward to seeing what you produce!

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Closing date for entries is 8 May 2015.

See page 86 for an entry form and our terms and conditions.



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- a) **Lake Nojiri, Japan**
- b) **Swiftcurrent Lake, USA**
- c) **Lake Louise, Canada**

The correct answer and the winner's name will be published in OP193 (on sale 4 June). Send your answer to opcomp@thegmcgroup.com, stating 'Sunset lake' as the subject, or drop it in the post to: Where in the world – 'Sunset lake', OP, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN.

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JANUARY ISSUE WINNER

In OP187 we asked you to name the colourful town featured in the photograph. The correct answer is:

c) Illulissat, Greenland



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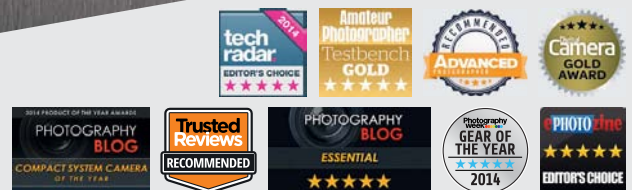
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